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HIGHER LAW.

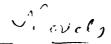


HIGHER LAW

A ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE PILGRIM AND THE SHRINE."



"I thought love had been a joyous thing," quoth my Uncle Toby.

"Tis the most serious thing, an' please your honour, (sometimes,) that is in the world."

Tristram Shandy.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL I.



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PART THE FIRST.

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HIGHER LAW:

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CHAPTER I.

"This part of mine is just one of the most difficult in the world to act. There is absolutely no character in it."

So spake Edmund Noel to Sophia Bevan, after a rehearsal for some private theatricals at Linnwood Manor House, North Devon, in the autumn of the year 1857. Such entertainments were a favourite amusement at Linnwood. Our tale does not require a description of them.

- "I should not have thought it unsuited to you on that account," returned the young lady, with vivacity.
 - "Meaning that-?" he inquired.
- "That you have never yet betrayed any such startling decision of character as would ensure your failing in a characterless rôle."
- "And, therefore, that having no character of my own, I ought to be the better able to supply one at you. I.

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need? Methinks that in default of your usual logic, the void would be not ungracefully occupied by a little extra good-nature. It is a pity when both are conspicuous by their absence."

"Brute that I am!" she exclaimed, her fine eyes filling with tears. "Yet you know that I can't resist my joke, and so you need not be so thin-skinned. I would not let anyone say behind your back what I say to your face. You know that well enough."

"I grant that if I were an eel, and must be skinned, I would rather have it done by you than by another," he returned.

"You feel the imputation of a want of a marked character so keenly?" she asked. "I don't see why you should, when most people who have it are odious."

"But not all," said Noel, more tenderly. "I know of one personage who is by no means odious, and yet has character enough for two."

"Ah, but then I am two," she answered. "I am an old woman as well as a young one; a clever woman as well as a stupid one; an ugly woman as well as a handsome one. The fairies who changed me did their work badly, and left two odd halves instead of one whole baby in my place."

"Poor dear Sophy," he said, softly. "Yet why will you not let your friends forget your misfortune, as I am sure they would, if you did not seem to take a delight in reminding them of it?"

"I suppose I am very foolish," she said; "but when a woman calls herself ugly it at least prevents others calling her so."

"On the defensive now!" exclaimed Noel. "Will you never comprehend that your friends do not need disarming? Regularity of feature does not comprise all the beauty in the world; and if you possess all the other kinds, surely you need not grieve so over the loss of that one. Your friends love you none the less."

"They are not in love with me, though. You are not a woman," she cried, "or you would know that beauty is a woman's most precious possession, and that she would give everything else for it. I would give all my brains to have my nice features back again. It is the only thing men really care for. I am a 'spoilt beauty' in the wrong sense."

She spoke energetically, and with a considerable spice of bitterness mingled with her regret. For Sophia Bevan had been a strikingly handsome girl, but had sacrificed much of her beauty of face in a moment of impulsive benevolence. Seeing smoke and flame issuing from a labourer's cottage on her father's estate, at a time when she knew the tenants to be absent at work, she was seized with the idea that they had left their child at home. In an agony of apprehension she forced her way into the burning house. Not at once finding the object of her search, she remained battling with the fire until she fell exhausted

and insensible; and was only saved from destruction by the arrival of the neighbours. Sophia was almost as much chagrined at finding that the exercise of her benevolence was superfluous, as at the damage to her beauty entailed by it. There was no child in the cottage, its mother having, contrary to her custom, taken it with her when she carried her husband's dinner to him in the fields. And Sophia's keen sense of the ludicrous contributed to aggravate the reminiscence. Her face was irretrievably injured. Her fine figure and bright eyes, her dark hair and sparkling ready wit, her rich voice and redundant energy, her largeness of heart and sympathy—these, however, all remained; and after the first years of disappointment she seemed to throw all her energies into her friendships, and to abandon the notion of love as a perquisite to which, through the loss of her beauty, she was no longer entitled. She did not, however, pretend to conceal her dissatisfaction with her changed prospects. The indomitable vivacity of her disposition put all concealment out of her power. In her eyes self-suppression was the most insignificant of virtues. Rather was it a vice, an hypocrisv. Reaction, depression, collapse, or fatigue, even after her most furious fits of fun, seemed utterly unknown to her. She was a sea always at high-tide; a river always brimming over; a wind ever boisterous. Freely allowing that she envied all beauty and its power of attraction, never was she in society without

the beauties all envying her. Insipid youths might go to them, but men always flocked around her; and it was always in her circle that the laugh was loudest, the wit keenest, and the wisdom shrewdest.

The years that had passed since her accident, and she was now seven-and-twenty, she had devoted to study with an eagerness and persistency which had their source, not only in her thoroughness of character, but also in her determination to win for herself a new position in society to replace that to which her beauty no longer entitled her. Her father, Sir Francis, who had died several years before the time to which we are referring, was a baronet, of considerable repute in the world of literature and politics. Her mother had died in the childhood of this their only child; and Sophia was now, as was her custom, spending the autumn with her stepmother in a charming country house which belonged to herself, among the wild beauties of the north coast of Devonshire.

Sophia and Lady Bevan were on the best possible terms together. They were entirely independent of each other, and as her ladyship had succeeded to her late husband's house in London, they found it convenient and pleasant to live together, and divide most of the year between the two places. The gentle and placid disposition of the elder lady enabled her to live in complete accord with her vivacious step-daughter, to whose movements and wishes it was a pleasure to her to adapt herself, and whom she

therefore suffered to rule her house, a task which Sophia certainly managed to perform with complete satisfaction to both parties. There was, accordingly, always an infusion of what she considered the fossil, that is the eminently respectable, element in their society, for the delectation of her staid relative; while for herself she took care to provide a following of lively and clever companions, who looked up to her as their guiding star.

Bright compound that she was of talent and energy, the statesmen, authors, artists, and savants who had at first been brought into her society through the influence of her father, now sought her for her own sake; or, as she said, for their own. "You come to me as to an intellectual tavern, and after getting the mental refreshment that you want, go away and think no more of me."

All who did or could do anything, found in her a ready appreciation and a warm sympathy in their labours. To stupidity and incapacity only was she indifferent. "Not that she herself could do anything," she used to say; "she had no faculty but her voice. Talk she could, and sing,—yes, that was doing something, for it amused others, and it was her creed that everybody in society is bound to contribute something to the general stock."

Her singing was of that rare order which is best described as dramatic. Rejecting anything weak or trashy, she threw such individuality and clearness

of expression into every note, as to make the words mean far more when sung than said. Her rendering of English ballads in particular was really glorious, though she herself preferred her French songs, and declared that she was more French than English, having lived many of her early years in Paris. the generality of people, her vivacity delightfully transcended the ordinary English type of manner, though the sedater proprieties who sought Lady Bevan's society, were sometimes a little doubtful whether even Sophia's cleverness, heartiness, and thorough purity of feeling, were quite sufficient to justify them in condoning the strong individuality of her manner. One less gifted would probably have fared worse at their hands.

Some of their friends professed to be puzzled by the relations between Sophia and Edmund, and shook their heads at the suggestion of a friendship between persons of opposite sexes who declined to consider matrimony as the be-all and end-all of such friendship. However, it was simple enough to themselves. He was a year the younger of the two. She had no brother; he had no sister. Thrown much together in early youth, they filled the void by the adoption of each other into those relations: and they remained boy and girl to each other, long after they were man and woman for the world.

In the four or five years which had elapsed since Noel graduated, and of which a considerable portion

had been spent abroad, there was no apparent change in their relations; no talk of marriage, or of love, and no diminution of friendship. Sophia was fond of him in spite of his being one of those who "did nothing:" and he was at ease with her as a man may be with one who expects and wants nothing of him but brotherly affection. She had many friendships with men, over whom she exercised an influence which it was evidently a delight to her to increase and to use. Frenchwomanlike, she was a bit of an intrigante at heart; but her benevolence and high sense of duty led her to invariably use her influence for good: and many an inward triumph she felt over her fairer friends who confessed their inferiority by coming to her for advice as to their treatment of their tardy or recusant lovers. She sometimes complained to Edmund Noel that she had less influence over him than over many who were far more indifferent to her. He knew that the accusation was true; but he shrunk from letting her perceive its He almost idolised beauty, but hers had never been the kind of beauty that had the deepest charm for him. Even before she had lost that attraction, he had been unable to conceal from himself that his intense appreciation of the gentler feminine qualities, caused him to recoil somewhat from her uncontrolled impulsiveness. For themselves, their relations had soon found their proper level; they felt that the temperature necessary for a closer intimacy was impossible between them; and he felt that however

warmly he might value her as a friend, and admire her talent, he could never reconcile himself to the contrast of demeanour which grew out of their opposite temperaments.

Thus, their relation to each other consisted of a firm friendship, tempered by such little outbreaks of sarcastic analysis as that which has already appeared, and in which it must be confessed that Sophia was invariably the assailant.

It was a curious instance of the combination of opposites, for his quietness of manner irritated her exuberant disposition as much as it attracted her. When in a good-humour with him she said that he "radiated repose." When otherwise, she was pro-But, the instant he answered voked at his calmness. her outburst by a sarcasm, she submitted, saying it gave him an unfair advantage over her that he should remain master of himself when she allowed her rage to master her. His customary reticence she interpreted into a rebuke of her volubility. She sometimes affected to think that it concealed passages in his life and feelings which he dared not exhibit. Making no secret of anything about herself, she could not comprehend his dislike to making his affairs or his history the property of his friends. She thought that she knew all about his means and his prospects, for she knew that he had inherited from his father, whose only child he was, a moderate estate in that neighbourhood, which had always been his home, and that he had considerable expectations from an uncle; but of his real principles and aims in life, she felt that their long intimacy had revealed nothing to her; and she did not even know if he had ever been in love! She thought he must have been, for he made no secret of his adoration of beauty; and he revealed so much of his foreign pursuits as showed that he was familiar with the studios of sculptors, and loved to try his own hand at the plastic art. Rumours had reached her, too, of his having been smitten more than once in his wanderings; and once, when Sophia had gained access to a room he had fitted up as a studio at home, she thought she perceived an identity of expression pervading several of his attempts, from which she drew her own conclusions. But he said nothing. only observing generally, when personal gossips were broached, that he thought it worse to say wrong than to do wrong, for the deed might affect the actors only, but the relation of it affected many and multiplied the mischief.

It was to him enouncing such a sentiment one evening that Sophia said with a scrutinising look:

"I wonder how much of that you mean, you horrid sphinx. I believe that you mean it all. You delight in going about like an animated charnel-house, only just managing to keep silence enough to conceal the horrors you contain."

"Yes," he replied, laughing. "The Campo-Santo at Naples is nothing in comparison, for there a few

shiny beetles do manage to crawl out in token of the dread deposits within. But the fact is, I cannot compete with you pure, open-hearted creatures, and so I keep my revelations to myself."

- "Oh, what a delicious bull," she exclaimed. "I believe you are like Canning's Knifegrinder: 'Story! God bless you, I have none to tell, sir;' and you keep that awful silence to conceal the yawning void within."
- "Well, you must allow that it is very good-natured of me, for you women dearly love a mystery."
- "Meaning yourself. Don't be conceited. If I do love you dearly, it's my folly and not your merit."
- "All grace, as the Calvinists say. Well, so long as it brings me to heaven, one must not criticise the vehicle."
- "Heaven won't do for you. Everybody is transparent there."
 - "You know why, I suppose?"
 - "Why?"
- "Because they all understand the language, and none fear to be read awrong: which is probably the reason why you women are called angels; your instinct is never at fault."
- "Except when we are so silly as to care for you men."
- "However," he added, "my motive, if I have any, for keeping myself to myself, is probably not quite what you pretend to imagine; but really in part

because I am constitutionally shy or reserved, and in part because of my dominant love of liberty. Once let everybody know all about oneself, and one is no longer one's own property. You know all about heaven and the way the angels go on, no doubt; but I can quote Bible for my view of things. Why should I let others into my secrets, supposing I have any, when we are enjoined not to let even our own right hand know what our left doeth? What can be more conclusive against confession?"

"And so, in private life, you are incapable of friendship, for there can be no real friendship without mutual confidence; and in public life you can win no reputation for yourself."

"In private life," returned Noel, "the amount of confidence is determined by the nature of the relationship, whether it be of friendship or of love. of friendship is to accept whatever of confidence may be freely reposed in me, without seeking to pry farther. That is, I accept my friend as he wishes to appear to me, and ignore his other sides. In love I allow no There, sympathy must be complete, and limitations. without reserve. As for winning a reputation among the public by putting my name to any book I may write, or otherwise, I owe the public no such satisfaction. If they like my book, they are indebted to me for the pleasure or information they may get from it, far more than I to them for their applause or their guineas. Besides, not only should I be no longer my own property, and free from troublesome inquisition, but I should be detracting from the value of my work. Not only do Truth and Beauty need no name of priest or prophet to back them; but with a name the one is apt to become only so and so's opinion, and the other so and so's ideal."

"Ah! I see you really are meditating a book," said Sophia; "but I suspect that there is still another reason at the bottom. You have not the courage to risk a failure. Your motto is, 'Better not try at all than try and fail.' While I infinitely prefer, 'Better to fail than not to try.'"

"Then why don't you write something? If your book only be as clever and amusing as your letters and conversation, and half as good as your singing, it is sure to be a success."

"Ah, everybody tells me so; but I haven't a bit of creative faculty in me. I don't know what an incident is. Nothing real ever happened to me, but once, and then I lost my head, and my face too, and knew nothing about it. I could write only what everybody skips, the reflections. Now if you would write the story, I think I could manage the padding. The fact is, I believe that no single woman can write a book about life and manners without running the risk of making herself ridiculous by some absurd blunders which would come through her want of the experience that marriage would give her. If you would live a life and get into scrapes, and correspond

with me about getting out of them, I am sure our letters would make a capital book."

- "Very good; I will get into a scrape at once."
- "On paper; and I will get you out, on paper."
- "You promise?" he asked, seriously.
- "But you mustn't behave ill to anybody."
- "Not even on paper?"
- "No; I can't have you behave ill anywhere."
- "I am to get into a scrape without behaving ill? Very good. I don't see at present how it is to be done, but I will watch my opportunity. I am to avoid the evil, but court the appearance of it."

Thus would Sophia Bevan and Edmund Noel have sat and talked together the whole evening, and no one would have thought it strange; but at this moment Sophia was called upon for a song. She complied, and until the whole party was ready to retire for the night, she sat at the piano pouring out song after song as from an inexhaustible store - French. English, Italian, German, Spanish; accompanying herself perfectly without book or note, and conversing with indescribable vivacity between each with all her visitors in turn, or at once; the centre and life of the whole party. And often after the most touching of her songs, when her audience was voiceless with the silence of threatening tears, she would jump up and utter some joke, and burst into heartiest laughter, as if quite forgetting that others could not keep up with her rapid changes of mood,

or avoid being shocked by her incongruities of manner.

On taking leave of Noel for the night, she said,

- "That's my idea of duty."
- "I am sorry you have found it so," he answered; "to everyone else it has been a great pleasure."
- "You have me there, I grant," she replied; "but I do enjoy a good chat with you, and was sorry to give it up. You are such a fitful personage; one never seems to be sure of your being really here. I shall not be the least surprised to find to-morrow that you have set off before breakfast for the Mountains of the Moon, or some other bourne whence postage stamps never return. You are a little moony, you know."
- "Never mind, so long as I am illumined by your sunshine. I ought, however, to be not little but full moony, if it be true, as you say, that we are such complete opposites."
- "I think I like the other best, for then you are nearest to me."

CHAPTER II.

Sophia Bevan was not backward to avail herself of the freedom conferred by her position. A frequent and welcome visitor at the houses of her friends, she insisted on having her own house full in her turn: and each autumn saw her the hostess of a gay and distinguished party of the friends whom she had met in London during the previous season. She owned that she liked "Londony" people, and was indifferent to the vegetative denizens of the provinces. Her favourite residences were first, London, then, her own house, when she had a party of London friends, and lastly, Brighton in the winter, because all Londoners went there. Her active mind and strong human sympathies made a real living society absolutely necessary to her. In the intervals of this, she lived upon the strongest food she could find in books, to the comprehension of which she brought a power of abstract thought, and a capacity for generalisation usual only in the most cultivated masculine understandings. It required little effort for her to seize the meaning of the abstrusest philosophical treatise, and assimilate it to her own vigorous mental constitution. Her large benevolence showed itself not so much in giving, as in helping others to help themselves, by infusing her own indomitable spirit of activity into their diffident or despairing minds. She lived as if, believing in no world beyond the present, she must do all she could without loss of time, by way of fulfilling her nature. To a mere lounger in life, sometimes to Noel himself, when indulging in reverie, or pleading delay to her urging him to go and distinguish himself, she would say,—

"Oh, that soul of yours! You will never do any good till you get rid of it. It is only because you fancy you will live for ever, and have plenty of time, that you are so idle. Remember the parable of the buried talents. I apply it to this life."

Of course, there were not wanting those who interpreted such utterance as a confession of faith, and it may be admitted that those who knew her best were aware that the sentiment proceeded no less from a participation in certain modern developments of thought, than from an intense aversion to any lack of energy, mental or physical, on the part of anyone with whom she came into contact.

Equally free from the obligations imposed by an adherence to any particular religious system, Edmund Noel was as great a contrast to Sophia Bevan as can well be conceived. Conscious that he was wasting his years in unworthy indolence, and doubtful as to what might be his proper vocation, he hesitated

to commit himself to any occupation that did not completely coincide with his idea of things, and respond to all the exigencies of his nature. felt himself artist, but not having had the special education necessary to enable him to achieve such high success as he coveted, in any of the lines which attracted him, he had devoted himself to the desultory study and contemplation of beauty, under whatever guise it might present itself to his view. Beauty in Art, beauty in Nature, beauty in Character, these formed the sole Trinity of his adoration, the sole representative for him of the Infinite in the Finite. Impelled by his mental constitution to seek toward the Absolute, and striving ever to see things in their highest or most complex aspect and relation, he had attained a patience almost divine in his method of procedure with the questions, social and abstract, to which his deeper thoughts were devoted, and which would have been quite divine if mated with a high and practical purpose.

Sophia Bevan was certainly the oldest and greatest friend he had, but her impulsiveness jarred upon him as much as his calmness and patience irritated her; for while he acknowledged the sting of the goad wherewith she sought to urge him on to achievement, he perceived that the effect was to hinder rather than to help him forward. His theory, by which he endeavoured to explain this to her, she either could not or would not understand.

"The mind that would perceive truth must remain at rest. Ruffle its surface or agitate its depths, and the rays from the universe become broken and distorted, and form no definite image."

This was his idea. Hers was different as their two natures, but each was harmonious in itself.

"The mind that pursues truth must not stand still. Truth is infinite, and the individual is an atom. We are as butterflies or bees in a garden of facts; and the insect that flies fastest and sucks most eagerly, sees most beauty and gathers most honey."

"Say, rather, devours most juice," he returned; "to make it into honey requires a very different process. Herein is our point of difference."

"I see, I see!" cried Sophia. "I get the juice, and you make it into honey. I buzz about and find the facts, and you arrange and harmonise them. On those terms we will be friends, and I will tease you no more,—except when you aggravate me by making honey too slowly."

"Three fine days and a thunderstorm?" he remarked, with a smile of arch interrogation.

"I forgive the insinuation against my temper for the sake of its cleverness. But really we have not had a serious quarrel all the autumn. If we get through to Christmas without one I shall claim the flitch of bacon," and she laughed heartily at her own joke.

Had Edmund's indifference to establishing a closer

relation to her been influenced by the circumstance of her loss of beauty, it would have been impossible for him to have felt at ease in her society. But the consciousness of the difference between their natures had from their earliest intimacy been sufficiently strong to keep him from ever overstepping the limits of brotherly regard. His sense of harmony probably scarcely exceeded hers; but, as she herself said, "he allowed it to exercise more influence on his life than she considered wise or right." He said that it was a question of proportion. It was this that made him an unpractical man in her eyes. She declared that he would never join any political party, because of some trifling points of divergence; would never marry till he found a goddess.

"Are you perfect yourself," she indignantly asked him one day, "that you think you have the right to have everything perfectly to your liking? Perfect knowledge and a perfect woman! How you will be taken in some day! You are just as likely to fancy you have found the desired perfection in another man's wife, and then may heaven have mercy on you! for you will never see her close enough to lose the illusion. You are not the man to let her run away with you. That would shock your royal highness's sense of delicacy, and you would reproach her for her demonstrativeness."

The amused twinkle of his eyes recalled her to herself, and before he could speak, she exclaimed,—

"You are always provoking me into saying the opposite of what I really mean! You will go and think now that I have been scolding you for not running away with a married woman. I always say you are the most immoral man I know,—you make me say such things, while you all the time look knowing and say nothing. I hate people to be always afraid of committing themselves. I tell you everything, and you tell me nothing, which I call unfair, and a dereliction of our friendship."

"I assure you that I am no conscious hypocrite," he replied. "My reserve is only the natural reaction from your openness. We both do what we can do best. Like the blessed Glendoveer,—

'Tis yours to speak, and mine to hear.'

One ingredient of sociability is to excite conversation in others without obtruding oneself."

"Well, you certainly have a talent for drawing people out without revealing yourself. You are a sort of mental precipice which people go to the edge of, and look over, and straightway fling themselves down."

"I hope they fall softly," returned Edmund, laughing. "But, supposing your account to be correct, surely it merely means that being self-contained and reticent about myself and my own affairs, people repose confidence in me in the belief that I shall be equally so about them and theirs."

"I don't believe it is anything half so nice," answered the lady. "People take you for a yawning grave, and hasten to you to bury their secrets in oblivion."

CHAPTER III.

In addition to the society of its brilliant owner, Linnwood Manor afforded excellent sport of various kinds, of which the gentlemen of the party there assembled were not backward to avail themselves. The leadership of the shooting-parties, which usually sallied forth immediately after breakfast, was tacitly, and as a matter of course, accorded to the well-known author and man of the world, Lord Littmass, who, as a cousin of Lady Bevan, an old friend of Sir Francis, and a peer of Scotland, was treated by both Lady Bevan and her step-daughter with much consideration. was he who occupied the place of master of the house at the dinner-table; to him they applied for advice in any emergency; and his keen judgment, consummate worldly knowledge, and great success in every line that he had followed, made him one of Sophia's greatest favourites. She often held him up to Noel as an example which in many respects he would do well to imitate.

Much as Noel admired him in a literary point of view, he rarely felt at ease in his society. Lord Littmass was not one of those men to whose presence anyone would be indifferent. He was far too dominant an ingredient in any society in which he might be, to be ignored. The talent shown in his conversation and writings delighted Noel, who readily admitted that if he had a story worth telling, Lord Littmass was the man to whom he should go for historian. But with regard to the man himself he felt an instinctive distrust. Confessing the nobility of the sentiments contained in his writings, he yet doubted the genuineness of his character. rallied him about his neglecting to cultivate the acquaintance of so eminent a man, and sought the reason of his aversion. Edmund answered that he was content with knowing him by his writings, and, on being pressed, added that he thought it unfair to seek to know more of one who had put so much of himself before the world; that a monopoly of all excellence was not to be looked for in anybody; and that it was unreasonable to expect that one who had proved himself so admirable in books, should be equally admirable in reality. He allowed, however, that he had nothing whatever against Lord Littmass; it was only a jar arising from difference of character, and he suggested to her that, slight though it might be, nothing was so likely to increase and to fix it as being called on to explain or account for it.

It was not, however, his aversion to Lord Littmass, that led Noel to prefer taking his rifle and wandering along the cliffs overhanging the Bristol channel, in search of any curious specimen he might find of bird or plant, to joining the shooting-parties in their forays on the game that stocked the covers of Linnwood Manor. His position as a resident in that neighbour-hood prevented his being considered merely as a guest of the Bevans, and enabled him to exercise his independence without seeming discourteous; for there was always a possibility of his being called away on business connected with his own property. Of course whenever Sophia found out that he had absented himself from the party without such excuse, she was not slow to exercise her powers of generalisation upon him in regard to this peculiarity.

"If you were a sailor you would prefer a cutting-out expedition all by yourself, to fighting in line of battle. As a hunter you would prefer the backwoodsman's solitary chase to the crowded battue of India. And as a suitor you will run the chance of losing your game by scorning to use the good offices of surrounding relatives to drive your objet into your snares. You will stalk your dear," she cried, with a shout of laughter, "and think everything is done when you have succeeded in making the poor thing in love with you; when you ought to be throwing your net over papas and mammas, and make all her belongings favourable to your suit, and so close in gradually but surely upon your prize."

This speech was made during lunch one day, when Edmund had been out alone since early morning. "There spake our friend's social qualities," said Lord Littmass to the party generally. "To be able to say 'alone I did it,' would be the reverse of a recommendation to her large sympathies. Miss Sophia Bevan's unselfishness would forbid her to win anything by herself, or for herself. But all the world must participate in the pleasure of the chase and the satisfaction of the capture."

"And in the enjoyment of the prize, too?" asked Noel, with a scarcely perceptible tinge of sarcasm.

"Well, we may hope and suppose there would be some exceptions to her catholic self-denial in that respect. Though, when once the mind inclines favourably to the principle of co-operation, it is not easy to see why it should stop short of absolute communism."

"Lord Littmass, hold your tongue!" exclaimed Sophia, with peremptory emphasis. "And, Edmund, tell us what you have been doing since sunrise."

- "Only fighting."
- "Where and for what?" asked Miss Bevan.
- "With and for whom?" asked Lord Littmass.
- "Don't be alarmed. Only against the Chinese."
- "Don't be absurd, mysterious, and provoking; but, do explain."
- "Merely to preserve my individuality. Are you not aware of the recent discovery that we are becoming so crowded together upon this little island, as to be in

danger of having all our angles rubbed off, and becoming as like each other as so many Chinese. Preferring my own organisation to that of my neighbours, if for no other reason than that it is mine, or me, I naturally desire to confirm and develop it, instead of merging my identity in the vast whole of a redundant population."

"If such be the effect of association," said Sophia, "surely it is better to become assimilated to one's own species, than to the birds, beasts, and fishes you find about the rocks and cliffs of North Devon."

"Why not say mermaids?" asked Noel.

"There is something human and feminine about them, and that would be enough to set you against their society."

"Not if they are like the one I saw this morning. Golden-auburn is exactly the right colour, is it not?"

"What nonsense has taken possession of you all to-day?" asked Lady Bevan.

"Whither did your wandering genius lead you this morning, and did you really have an adventure?" asked Sophia, with more interest than the occasion seemed to warrant, while Lady Bevan and Lord Littmass exchanged a hasty glance.

"I know by your writings," said Noel to Lord Littmass, with the intention of turning the conversation, "that you hold with Wordsworth the sentiment.

^{&#}x27;The world is too much with us,'

and appreciate the necessity of a certain amount of solitude for self-culture, and indeed for self-respect."

"A short experience of barrack life would cure anyone of doubting it," replied Lord Littmass. "There are no 'oaks' to be 'sported' there as at the Universities. But I fancy it is not so much of Wordsworth as of Thomson's verses that our friends are reminded by your utterance of just now. Mermaid and Musidora have the same initial, and are alike associated in the mind with bathing. A foolish association, doubtless, as we never talk of fish bathing, and mermaids are not amphibious, but wholly fishy beings."

"I think it is your lordship who is now confounding Thomson's Seasons, his summer with our autumn," returned Noel, concealing altogether his surprise at the direction into which the conversation was so persistently turned, a concealment which his habit of self-control made easy for him.

Sophia, however, knew him too well not to divine that he had some meaning in his mind when he alluded to such a thing as a mermaid; and with her usual precipitancy and not very unusual correctness, she jumped to the conclusion that he did not wish to be drawn out, at least, before the whole party, and so she came forward as an effectual ally to turn the general attention to some other quarter.

"Who will drive over with me to Waters'-Meet this afternoon, and try their luck in the Lynn? We shall

have two good hours for fishing; the carriages will hold eight, with appliances, and I want to pay a visit there."

"Trout-fishing with ladies!" exclaimed Lord Littmass, with a slight and not unpardonable sneer. "It may be true that women fall in love through the ear, but trout are not to be tickled and taken in that way. Besides, it is too damp for me under the trees at this time of year."

"And too late in the day to go fly-fishing," added one of the younger men; "but I vote for making a day of it to-morrow, and taking lunch with us; that is if the ladies will promise to wear garments of dusky hue, and reserve the sweet music of their voices till the sport be over."

"Very good," said Sophia, "that is settled; but I want to go there to-day, and invite you, Edmund, to escort me."

"Now," she said to Noel, when settled in her place in the carriage, "I saved you from the inquisitors whom you indiscreetly provoked at lunch. Tell me what you meant. Which way did you go this morning? I have a particular reason for asking, because if you went one way it may lead to a change in our party, and if another, it is of no consequence."

"Well, if I was mysterious before, I am altogether surpassed by you now. And as there seems to be so much more than meets the eye, I feel disposed to keep silence until I know what it all means."

"It is too late now," said Sophia. "Did you not notice the looks exchanged between mamma and his lordship when you spoke of your morning ramble?"

"I did not observe that you were implicated in them; but I agree to exchange mystery for mystery."

"Well, as I first discovered my mystery myself, I consider it is my own, and that I violate no confidence in revealing it. Besides, I never consider that I am breaking a secret by imparting it to you."

"It seems to me," he said, "that the conspirators have betrayed themselves by their notice of what might have been a merely accidental observation of mine. Why make this the occasion of disburdening your mind when you can still cherish your secret in secret?"

"Because it is too late. If you went somewhere this morning, you might go somewhere again, and that would not suit the views of somebody. I won't stop to quarrel with you for pretending not to want to know anything I can tell you; but, say, you did not go towards the Valley of Rocks this morning, but by Porlock Cove?"

"Your clairvoyance is unerring. Pray how long has the cottage been tenanted?"

"Now, how could you find that out unless you went round by water. It was chosen for its present inhabitant chiefly on account of its utter inaccessibility. I knew the dear old spot well as a child. It is down in a little cleft between high cliffs which

overhang the sea on each side, and is hidden in the rear by a dense copse; the whole being enclosed by hedges and gates at the back and the sea in front. I know that its inmates never come out of their retreat; so that if you did not go in a boat, you must have obtained access either as a seagull or the early milkman."

"By your description it should be either a numery or a lunatic asylum. I trust that what I beheld this morning was not a symptom of either."

"Possibly a little of both. But tell me what occurred, and then I shall know to supplement your account."

"Well, as you know the position so well, it needs no diagram to make my description intelligible. Deeming the place utterly deserted, I took a fancy for getting to it by climbing round the face of the cliff about half way up."

"Oh, don't!" cried Sophia, putting her hand over her eyes. "It makes me giddy to think of it."

"Then it would have made you giddier had you been there. There is no path; so by dint of kicking little hollows in the side to stick my toes in, and holding on by the shrubs, I managed to climb round the jutting edge exactly as the sun was beginning to show itself red and splendid above the horizon. And there I stuck, unable to move without alarming or shocking the damsel who was disporting herself at perfect ease in the waters of the cove, never dreaming

of an observer; her sole attire being the magnificent hair which shone in the glow of the red and level sun as a most glorious golden auburn. Altogether, the tall white form as it emerged radiant from the water,

'Kissed by the glowing light of morn,'

so vividly suggested the birth of a new Venus, that I longed to be the artist or poet that could adequately celebrate it."

"Well, I am sure you seem to have watched her carefully enough," said Sophia, half amused and half angry.

"I could not help myself. At first, seeing upon what sacred ground I was treading, I endeavoured to retreat. But it was impossible to attempt it without risking an almost certain fall down the cliff. Hampered by my rifle, my footsteps broken away, and, worst of all, the shrubs loosened by my pulling at them, it was as much as I could do to keep my place; while retreat was impossible. I debated the propriety of giving her an alarm, but I thought that would shock her delicacy, and put an end for ever to all enjoyment of her bath; and so I resolved to keep perfectly quiet until she had finished and gone away: believing that utter ignorance would be the pleasantest frame of mind for her, and that if no one knew, no one would be the worse. As for myself, I feel the It was Greek unconsciousness in more better. senses than one."

"Poor child," said Sophia. "How mad I should be if such a thing happened to me."

"Not if you did not know it," said Noel; "and that is the principle that I went on."

"What became of her?"

"I was so occupied in maintaining my foothold, and, if you will believe me, so disgusted with the part I was involuntarily playing, that I did not observe the exact moment when she left the water. I just caught a glimpse of a white long-robed figure vanishing in the wood that hides the cottage, and when I felt sure of being unobserved, I climbed round the point, and stole into the copse and came back by the inland route."

"It was she, then, as I and the others suspected."

"She! Who?"

"Lord Littmass's ward, who wanted to take the veil."

"I can assure her that she looks very well without one. But I did not give Lord Littmass credit for any responsibilities. And how on earth comes she to be buried in that secluded spot?"

"Lord Littmass no responsibilities! Do you really mean to say that your aversion to him is purely instinctive, and that you know nothing whatever of his domestic history?"

"Incredible as it may appear to you, it certainly is so. But I have always felt that it would not surprise me to hear anything of him; provided, of course, that it did not involve the possession of any very great amount of moral excellence. But how long has the young lady been there, and why should she take the veil?"

"It is a long story, and I don't know all the particulars. Lord Littmass considers the credit of the family concerned in some way, and so not a word is ever said aloud on the subject, either of his ward or his son."

"His son!"

"You sweet innocent, you never know anything about people. Yes, his son by his wife who was mamma's-I mean the present Lady Bevan'sgoverness. He induced her to go off with him under promise of marriage; and after nearly breaking her heart, he only married her just before their first child was born; and then only, I believe, more in order to prevent the threatened withdrawal of my father's friendship than from any sense of duty or contrition. The whole affair was kept private, and the poor lady, for lady she was, I have heard, in every respect, died, and left him only this son, whom he has brought up in ignorance of his parentage, but well educated. I believe he rarely sees him, and scarcely knows whether he loves or hates him."

"What and where is the son now?"

"He succeeded admirably at the University, and obtained a travelling fellowship, which, being without home or acknowledged ties of kindred, he has availed

himself of to the utmost, devoting himself, I believe, to botany and other scientific pursuits in the remotest regions."

"Do you know him personally?"

"But slightly. I met him once at a party at Lord Littmass's in London, some three or four years ago. He took me down to dinner, and I was much interested in his conversation; for he seemed to ignore both himself and me as human members of society. and to be simply an intellect, unconscious of, or indifferent to all personal relations in time or space; probably because he never had any. For once in my life I was an almost silent listener, making only an occasional suggestion, in order, by the exhibition of a sympathy imperceptible to him, to lead him on to talk. With all his talent, he gave me the impression of being a most unpractical man in the little essentials of The bow of his necktie was anywhere but where it should have been; his coat had been hustled on with the collar tucked all awry; and he allowed that he was often nearly starved merely through forgetting to eat. His whole look and manner, showed that he had never known womanly care or association. An enterprising wife would find a fine field for her energies in civilising James Maynard."

"James Maynard, Lord Littmass's son!"

"Yes, but he does not know it. He has grown up in the belief that he is an orphan, and that Lord Littmass is his benefactor."

- "James Maynard of Saint Catherine's, Oxford?"
- "Yes; do you know him?"
- "A man of middle height, wiry figure, straight dark hair which he wears rather long, and altogether giving one the idea of perpetual unrest?"
- "That is his picture exactly. Do you know him personally?"

"I know of him. His rooms were one of the sights of the University. He was quite unconscious of it himself, but it was the usual thing for men who had friends up to watch him go out, and then to bribe his servant to let them in. I was admitted once, and never was old curiosity shop more quaintly stored. hardly know whether the sights or the sounds were most remarkable. As I went in the man said, 'Mind the snake, sir; and, looking up, there was a great reptile coiled round a bar just over my head, hissing furiously, but without teeth; and birds and beasts. living or stuffed, were on all sides. Baskets of rare plants, and trays of books hung alternately from the ceiling. Ranged in one corner, stood the gilded pipes of the old college organ. Multitudes of bits of huge wax candles stood on every shelf and table, anything serving for candlestick—a root or knot of an old tree, the shoulder of an old marble bust, the hand of a carved oaken saint; and each candle was surmounted by a gigantic extinguisher, made of cardboard and covered with gold, silver, or coloured paper. These were said to indicate some ancient worship, which he had the

credit of wishing to revive. Then there were models of Stonehenge, the Irish round towers, and various Indian shrines and temples. It required all one's care to get through the rooms without upsetting something, or knocking one's head against the pendents, in order to get to the windows at the back, where, overlooking the college gardens, he had built a balcony, which appeared altogether insecure, but was most picturesquely provided with a divan. This was his favourite lounge. where, surrounded by birds, flowers, and fountains of his own construction, he used to lie and either read or doze,—for it was said that he never went to bed,—or converse with the men of his college, who delighted to come and smoke there with him. For himself, he never smoked, but rather encouraged it in others, saying it killed the blight on his flowers. He had the reputation of being a clever original, and it was said that he had two aims in life-"

"Oh yes, I know, for he told me he should die happy, if he could find God in Nature, and prove that Jesus spoke Greek."

"When he began travelling, which was soon after he took his degree, I have heard that he abandoned the second, and merged the first of those aims in the search after the secret of life. On this quest he wandered far and wide, as if thinking that the farther he got from civilisation, the nearer he would be to nature. The wild flowers of the Amazon yielded him their beauty, and animals, fishes, and insects innumerable, breathed their last under his searching knife. I attended a meeting of the Philosophical Society to hear a paper on his discoveries among the simpler organisations of the zoophytes and other semi-vegetable existences, when he gained great credit for the variety and minuteness of his investigations, and the lucidity of his analysis. The last that I heard of him was, that finding himself in a mining region in the Cordilleras, or in the Ural Mountains, or somewhere, he suddenly shifted his solicitude to the mineral world, and endeavoured to prove that dualism is as necessary to productiveness there as in organic life."

"Yes, and from exercising his inquisitorial faculties upon minerals and metals, he became an enthusiastic miner, and held that the first duty of every man is to become rich. He is, however, the last man whom I should expect to succeed in such an endeavour-I believe that he comes to except, perhaps, yourself. England at intervals, but never stays long; and that each time he comes Lord Littmass betrays more and more uneasiness, as feeling that he must some day acknowledge him as his son, and yet shrinking from revealing the history of his marriage to a world that at present believes him to be of a blameless life. I have but scanty reasons for my suspicion, but I am inclined to think that he is involved in some perplexity about his ward, Margaret Waring, of whom you have already seen too much to-day."

[&]quot;Do you mean in connection with his son?"

- "I hardly know. You always laugh at me for jumping to conclusions; but I cannot otherwise understand why she should be sent into hiding down here just after coming out of a French convent. I have a great mind to ask mamma all about it when we get home."
- "Well, but who is this mysterious damsel, and why should she be doomed successively to such solitudes as those of a French convent and Porlock Cove?"
- "I believe she is of a peculiar disposition, half devote, half artiste; and that Lord Littmass considers it necessary to her health, whether of mind or body, to defer her introduction to the world beyond the usual time."
 - "But who is she?"
- "I understand that he represents her to be the orphan child of an old friend, bequeathed to his especial and exclusive care, and that she has some little property, which is also under his control until her marriage."
 - "Not his own daughter, surely?"
- "No, I am pretty certain of that. But there is a mystery, and I am not inclined to put up with it. Perhaps when we get home we shall learn more, for I am confident that your adventure of this morning has precipitated events."

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE returning from their visit to the Waters'-Meet, Noel told Sophia that however great might be his interest in James Maynard or the mermaid, he was very averse to meddling with, or prying into, the affairs of Lord Littmass; and she might find it a dangerous pool to stir, and regret afterwards having approached it.

- "I don't care," she replied; "he has no business as an old friend and a relation of mamma's, who half lives in our house, to go and have skeletons and things in our cupboards; and so I mean to rout them out. I have put up with it long enough, and I know mamma is worried by it. Besides, supposing that there is nothing that I can do when I know all, I can go on holding my tongue as I have done all these years. You needn't laugh at the idea of my being silent. You know I can do it when I like."
- "Well, do as you think best, only be careful. Lady Bevan is gentle and nervous, and Lord Littmass may be dangerous, and you are impetuous; and I am meditating an early start for London to-morrow."
 - "What, running away from the scene of action?"

"The emergency is this: I undertook to write a paper for one of the Quarterlies, and the editor has written to say that up to a very recent date my article was unimpeachable, but that some new information has come out which I must consult before my paper is put into type. And the time is so short, that he advises me to come to London about it at once. I shall have to stop on the road, so that really I have no choice."

"I shall be sorry to lose you; but go by all means. I didn't know you had any connection in that quarter. You never told me a word about your writing when I have been scolding you for not writing."

"I have done so little in that way yet, that perhaps I felt I deserved your reproaches; and I hate cackling over my eggs, especially when they are only experimental ones. I like to appear before my friends as a full-blown author, and not as a student merely. What else is power or grace but concealment of method? I prefer sweeping away my chips before exhibiting my work."

"I remember how clean and tidy your studio was when I had the honour of admission to see your bust of Undine. And I was disappointed at being received as a stranger, and not finding you in your shirt-sleeves, and treading on bits of marble."

"Just as, when you dine out, the first thing you do is to rush into the kitchen and see how the dinner is being cooked."

"I don't do anything of the kind, sir. I care more how the company is dressed than the food. I am so glad, however, to find that you are writing something, that I won't quarrel with you at present. It was always your fancy to gather your experience in private, and appear as a proficient all at once. Do you remember when my father resuscitated the forgotten game which used to be called 'the devil on two sticks,' but which we called 'whizzgig,' how we were all toiling to discover the secret of playing it, and you wouldn't touch it until you suddenly took it up one day and astonished papa himself, who said he had never seen it played better; and all the time you had been shutting yourself up and practising it in private? You seem to go on the same principle now, and I shall not be surprised any day to see you come out in some character which involves an experience your friends have little idea you possess - perhaps an awfully wicked one. Even now you may be a regular Don Giovanni for aught I can tell."

"Yes; happily we are not transparent for our thoughts to shine out through us. There is a possibility of concealing one's bad side. It is a great blessing to be able to bury our dead past out of the sight of our friends, if not out of our own. But tell me, do you not practise your songs in private before singing them to your friends?"

"Scarcely. I just glance at them when they first come, to get an idea of their meaning. Little more."

"You do that by an intense though momentary concentration, which you can perhaps exercise in the presence of others, the question being one of interpretation only. Were it one of creation, as with most artist work, I suspect you would be more retiring when the faculty had to be exercised."

"I don't know. I never could create anything. I can only criticise what others do. I have no invention; and if I had I believe it would be just the same." And then, tickled by some fancy, she went off into an explosion of laughter, which kept breaking out again on every attempt to renew the conversation, until they were nearly home.

On entering the Manor House, Sophia found Lady Bevan watching for her with a somewhat uneasy aspect. Taking her aside, she told her that Lord Littmass had been suddenly called away to London, and might not return for some time; and that she proposed to pass the evening in her room, and would be glad if Sophia would come in for half an hour in the evening. Noel then advanced, and thanking Lady Bevan for her hospitality, said he would take that opportunity of bidding her good-bye, as he was going to start early for London. With a glance toward Sophia, Lady Bevan asked him when this resolution was made.

- "On the receipt of my letters yesterday."
- "I wish you could give us at least another day. It will be a great blow to lose our two principal gentlemen at once. Can you not manage it?"

- "I shall be only too glad to stay if I can be of any use," said Noel. "Not that I feel myself essential to your comfort, even in the absence of Lord Littmass," he added, laughing.
- "I depend upon you, then, for to-morrow at least," said Lady Bevan, retiring.

CHAPTER V.

JAMES MAYNARD and Margaret Waring were wards of Lord Littmass, though not by virtue of Chancery. When children they had constantly met in his house in Mayfair, during the boy's holidays. James, who was some seven years the elder, had from the first been awed and attracted by the weird calmness and spiritual transparency of Margaret's nature. wayward, fitful disposition, recognising no heaven save one that must be taken by storm, this child's quiet grace was as a new Apocalypse; but he scarcely became conscious of the effect she had produced on him until he met her unexpectedly when, in her fifteenth year, she was sojourning at Heidelberg with an unmarried elder sister of her guardian, who had been taken ill there on her way to Rome. Lady Primavera, or, as she was familiarly styled among her acquaintances, Lady Prim, no sooner learnt that the child had found an old friend and playmate with whom she roamed about the old ruins, and admired the rich autumnal tints of the woods that reached far away over the hill-tops, and that this old friend was James Maynard, than she at once, and as if by an effort of her will, got well enough to continue her journey. This resolution was precipitated by the demonstrative conduct of certain students of the University of Heidelberg. Poor Margaret, who was tall for her age, had quite unconsciously excited the fierce admiration of several of these ardent Teuton youths. Two parties, each alike intending to serenade her, met one evening under her window; but from songs they proceeded to blows, several were wounded, and the disturbance was so serious that the Burgomaster called next morning, to explain the cause of it to Lady Prim, and to apologise on behalf of the town.

Endowed with such a keen appreciation of the "improper" as to be in the habit of denouncing the most innocent romps of children as "bold and dangerous familiarities," whenever the party consisted of both sexes, Lady Prim took fire at the equivocal position of her charge, and began to look upon Margaret as a firebrand, dangerous alike to herself and others; and so, suddenly left Heidelberg for her winter's destination.

Born in Florence while her father held the Embassy there, christened by an Italian name, and decidedly more Catholic than Protestant at heart, she looked to Rome as her ultimate residence, and now hastened thither with the child whom her brother had committed to her charge, and a favourite old servant of the family, who had known Margaret's mother, and had tended Margaret herself from infancy.

Not for herself only was Lady Prim anxious to reach Rome. There was a vague notion in her mind that the circumstances attending Margaret's birth were somehow such as required to be in some way remedied by priestly contact, and that a journey to Rome was a sort of pilgrimage, the performance of which exercised a healthy and retrospective influence. Decided as were this good lady's ideas of duty, her perceptions of fact were very dim. Her brother's ascendancy over her was complete. He had left her in doubt about Margaret's real history, intimating that it was not a subject for her to enter upon; and she ever after rigidly abstained from inquiry or conjecture, believing that if it were "proper" for her to know it she would have known it. She was not aware that her ignorance was not shared by nurse Partridge, for her character was one that prohibited indulgence in anything approaching to familiar conversation with servants; and the dame looked upon herself as belonging to Lord Littmass rather than to his sister, and to Margaret more than to either. While serving Lady Prim she did not love her; and she had no promptings, either from within or from without, to disclose to her aught that she knew.

In short, the dame was a good creature, who understood young people, though somewhat puzzled by Margaret whom she dearly loved; and she resented the prudery that would chill young lives with gloom and distrust. She was a great ally, also, of James

Maynard; and if she had any suspicions of his parentage, she kept them so entirely to herself, that even Lord Littmass was in doubt whether she knew or not. It was under her kindly eye that they had explored the wild glens of the Neckar; and it was owing to the contagion of her reticence, rather than to any conscious caution, that Margaret adopted the same habit of silence as to her outdoor companionship.

Such reserve, indeed, was but part of Margaret's character, and it well became her. It was in perfect harmony with the wondering, dreamy look that was habitual to her; a look that seemed to imply that she was but a new arrival in the world from some other state of existence, and had not yet learnt to understand its ways, or become accustomed to the things about her. When now and then a gleam of sudden appreciation lighted up her eyes, as James Maynard described to her the organism of some flower, or explained the significance of some legend, painting, or statue, he started at its wondrous suggestiveness of a double existence of which the old was but slowly giving place to the new,—so slowly, indeed, that he sometimes doubted if the angel would ever quite yield to the woman. On the occasion of Lady Prim's sudden alarm, she vanished from Heidelberg without an opportunity of bidding farewell to James. His first impulse was to follow at once in her supposed track; but he reflected. His vacation was just over. His duties at Oxford were about to recommence, and

she had told him that Rome was to be her destination for the winter. "Perhaps," said he to himself, "I shall find my way thither at Christmas." Christmas came, and with it duties which he could not conscientiously evade. The Easter vacation brought him no liberty, and was, moreover, too short to see Rome satisfactorily. The long summer vacation gave him a scientific commission to South America. And so winter came round again before he could carry out his old intention of visiting Rome. Then he went, thinking but little of his child friend, and much of the place he was going to see.

He had paid his annual visit to Lord Littmass, and found him in mourning for his sister, Lady Prim, who had died of heart disease accelerated by starvation during the previous Lent; for, under the spiritual manipulation of the priests, she had followed her native bent and become very devout.

"It is the weak point of our family," said Lord Littmass, when imparting this information to Maynard; "the heart weakness, I mean, not the devoutness; and it has the advantage of saving doctors' bills, and the discomfort of a long illness; while its disadvantages may be postponed indefinitely by care."

But he said nothing of Margaret and her nurse, and Maynard did not venture any inquiry. Perhaps it did not occur to him to do so, the information being vouchsafed in reference only to Lord Littmass's garb. So to Rome went James Maynard, with a whole month in which to explore its glories, and no thought of any personal interests or engrossments to distract his attention.

CHAPTER VI.

A MEMORABLE era is it in the life of a young Englishman of high intellect and culture when he first enters the gates of Rome. The whole of his associations belong to the past. Memories of the old Christian and older Pagan systems throng upon his mind. existence of a Present or a Future, which in the modern world thrusts itself at every moment upon the attention, does not there occur to him. He seems to be in a dream, which has no relation to his waking life. James Maynard found nothing incongruous with his preconceived ideas. Regarding Christian Rome as the flower and fruit of the best of the ancient Paganisms, he vet was not disappointed at seeing no signs of a vitality that promised to yield a seed for future growth. He was at once antiquarian enough to enjoy the contemplation of the past, and humanitarian enough to rejoice in man's gradual emancipation from the trammels of a terrifying mystery, and his transference to the regime of positive science. Accustomed to view the world's past, present, and future as connected parts of a continuous whole, and with Hobbes, Pascal, and Comte, to regard the generations of men

as one man always living and incessantly learning, he was able to discern ample resemblance between the oldest and newest phases of faith and practice to establish their real identity of origin and character.

Wandering through modern church and ancient temple, witnessing the ceremonies of the one, recalling the rites of the other, and comparing the fundamental doctrines of both, Maynard found himself exulting in the reflection that the grand old systems of India, Egypt, Greece, and Rome are not dead, but through their alliance with the old Hebraism still survive, like parents in their offspring, transmitting the same lineaments and characteristics from the earliest historical periods to the present.

"All alike, all alike," he muttered to himself, when watching one day a grand religious ceremonial in St. Peter's, with pope, and cardinals, and priests officiating, and the multitude adoring around. "Mankind is everywhere divided into two classes, the priesthood and the people. Persuasion may be better than force, but here the rulers have both. It was a great idea to govern men by means of their ignorance. Ignorance, Veneration, Fear, a whole trinity of fetters ready made to the rulers' hand, and warranted to outlast the ages. Luther but half did his work. He knew more than he dared to say. Had his successors but gone back upon their basis of operations, instead of attempting to advance beyond it, mankind would have been spared the waste of centuries. Luther saved Rome.

Are men for ever to go wrong when they seek to construct? Is man's sole function that of analysis? As it is, the Reformation has given us a scarcely refined Hebraism instead of the scarcely refined Paganism that prevails here. Had it but substituted the Greek for the ascetic and Judaic element, it would have proved the resuscitator of Art and Beauty, and the parent of Science in modern life, and by its encouragement of real knowledge have proved the interpreter and minister of Nature. The Roman understands, and is silent. The Protestant is ignorant, and argues. How must the Initiated laugh in their sleeves, as they see the vain wanderings of blind leading or following blind! No wonder they are so irreconcilably hostile. The conflict, which began thousands of years ago, has become more bitter as its origin has been forgotten. Yes, since the day when it first occurred to man to make God in his own image, has the feud existed. Cain and Abel, Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic, under whatever name, the quarrel is one, and will last till--no, not for ever, surely, if man continue his progress, however But the Eternal must be very patient!"

The bent of James Maynard's mind, and the character of his philosophy being indicated by these reflections, it is little wonder that he soon withdrew alike from church and temple, and devoted himself to the galleries, where the contemplation of Greek art in its ineffable calmness soon won him to be its exclusive

votary. Deeply imbued with the Greek philosophy, he possessed much of the Greek unconsciousness. Yet his analysis of things external to himself was at once sympathetically searching, and pitilessly keen as that of an arch-inquisitor.

The tenderer mood soon became that in which he viewed all things in Rome, for it was the mood evoked by the softening influence of Margaret Waring, whom he found one day sitting in the Vatican, intent on the countenance of the Apollo Belvedere, as if determined to read his inmost character. Her good nurse was busily knitting by her side, for though she always humoured and accompanied her young mistress, she did not care about looking at the "figures" herself.

"A human god, a human god," murmured Margaret, more to herself than to her companion.

"And, pray, what else would you have?" asked Maynard rather sharply, turning to the speaker without having before observed her.

"Mr. Maynard!" exclaimed Margaret in a voice of delight. "I am so glad, and you can explain so much to me. I half fancied you would have come last winter."

"And have you been in Rome ever since we parted at Heidelberg?" he asked, shaking hands eagerly with them both. "It is for me then to learn of you. I am but a new comer, and have already felt the need of some fairy to conduct me through this wonder-land."

"Ah, I think our positions will be the same as of

- old. I can tell you where everything is, but I want the key to open them when I get to them."
- "And are you and the dame taking care of each other in Rome?"
- "Oh yes, it is so delightfully free. One has only to be an artist, or pretend to be one, to have all the privilege of age or manhood."
- "Then the vacancy made by poor Lady Prim's death did not require filling?"
- "No; nurse goes everywhere with me. But now you are come she will be only too well pleased to stay at home, if you are serious in wishing me to be your guide to Rome."

They were both standing before the Apollo while thus conversing, Margaret self-possessed and quite unaware that under the fostering sun of Italy she had made considerable progress in growing into a tall and lovely young woman during the interval since they had last met, and glad with a sister's gladness at seeing her friend and patron once more; and James at first delighted at the improvement which had taken place in her, and at the heartiness of her greeting, and then half disappointed at the absence of all shyness or embarrassment in her manner.

"It is to be service for service then?" he answered; "you will guide me to the exteriors of things, and I am to do my best to lead you to their interior significance. Your feminine instinct is very apt to render such help superfluous, but I shall not decline

the office. Tell me, what did you mean by your exclamation of regret just now?"

"I did not mean to be overheard," replied Margaret, turning crimson at the idea of having revealed her secret thought; "but I was wondering whether the ancients ever longed for the knowledge of some Being who was superior to man's weakness and yet could sympathise with man in his weakness."

"And what answer did Apollo vouchsafe?"

"The scornful triumph of his face tells me that he is but a man, self-centred, and subject to comparisons."

"Yet surely a divine man in his immeasurable superiority," returned Maynard. "Were the human element absent, how could the divine be represented at all? Unhuman, it would be merely animal, or an unintelligible monstrosity and representative of nothing to our imaginations. Were the capacity for love and for hate absent from the expression of that face, how could he sympathise with man in his strongest feelings? Is not the scorn of evil there written, mingled with the triumph of its overthrow?"

"Not for me," said Margaret firmly. "His love is self-love. He can triumph in the easy victory of the destruction he has dealt, but not in winning his enemies to be his friends. His is the love that a slight would turn into hate, for if he loves it is for his own sake. His devotion is to his own glory. A beautiful self-seeker is Apollo."

Thus thought Margaret aloud, forgetting in the in-

tensity of her abstraction, the existence of all hearers. Maynard recalled her to herself by exclaiming,

"Your heart has divined the truth. Devotion, self-sacrifice for the good of others—in vain you seek these in the Olympian god. To you is vouchsafed the later revelation, for you have discerned its significance. You have made Apollo testify to the superior divinity of Humanity. Henceforth you shall guide me."

"Nay," said Margaret, smiling and rising from the bench on which they had been seated during the discussion. "I have been here many times, but never, until you came, did I see that the Apollo is a symbol of an older and inferior faith, a faith which recognised only the beauty of being."

"Which, of all the marbles, is your favourite here?" asked Maynard, as they passed into the court of the Laocöon.

"I scarcely know. They seem to vary with my mood. Sometimes I am so riveted by the agony of this poor father, that I can neither stay nor tear my-self away."

"Why of the father only? the boys are terrified enough, surely."

"Yes; but only on their own account. He suffers for them even more than for himself."

"You are right," said Maynard. "Accustomed to his protection, they do not yet despair, for he is with them. They have not yet learnt the powerlessness to aid them, the consciousness of which gives all its in-

tensity to his agony. Your insight is correct again. His greatest suffering is for others. What anguish can be bitterer than that of the father who feels that they must look to him in vain; they, the children, to succour whom has ever been his supreme delight? Thus, the most human is the most divine. The Greeks knew it, and made their men better than their deities."

But Margaret seemed to hear him not, so intent was she on the old man's countenance. At last she suddenly turned away, saying,—

"I cannot bear it; let us go."

Entering the cabinet tenanted by Canova's Perseus and Pugilists, Maynard inquired of Margaret why she did not follow.

- "I hate that court," she said, "for it is to me the abode of the spirit of evil. I always shudder as I pass it."
- "Why, is not this Perseus fair and harmless enough?"
- "A harmless hero, truly," she returned, with a tinge of sarcasm in her tone, which indicated to James a side of her nature the existence of which he had not before suspected. "Canova has made evil strong, and goodness feeble and foolish."
- "That crouching Pugilist is certainly one of the most horrid creatures ever done into marble," said James, "but the other is a noble young fellow enough, and worthy a better fate; and—yes, yes, you are

quite right—that is not the Perseus who cut off the Medusa's head. He is a youth posing for the part: a petit maître and no hero."

"Oh, thank you," cried Margaret, "that is exactly what I wanted."

Thus they continued conversing and discussing the marvels of art around them, indulging in that sort of criticism which is often doubly interesting in that it is as much an index to the character of the critic as to that of the thing criticised, until the dame came to remind Margaret that it was time to go home for her painting lesson. Maynard accompanied her to the foot of their staircase, and made an appointment for the next day. They talked as they went of Margaret's pursuits, and agreed in placing Sculpture above Painting, inasmuch as form is more than colour; and she expressed her regret that the time, labour, and numerous appliances requisite for sculpture made it impossible for her to practise it. Feeling the artistsoul within her striving for expression, Margaret, as doubtless many others have done, longed for such facilities as would be afforded by the establishment of a general studio whither she could repair to execute her own work, or where she could have her models of clay transferred to imperishable marble by hands more fitted for the toil.

"Thus only," she said to Maynard, "can the fair visions of many an artist, rich to imagine, but feeble to execute, ever find an opportunity of expression. If

artists would but co-operate in that way, how much richer in eternal forms of beauty the world would be."

For want of such aid she devoted herself to painting and music; and never was she so perfectly happy as when joining in the devotional harmonies of the nuns in the convent chapel which adjoined her lodging.

It was in this way that James and Margaret met, and talked, and beheld, and he unconsciously fell in with her mood, and attuned his own stores of scholastic knowledge and original reflection to her deeply devotional and pure artistic spirit. In presence of the calm and holy life she followed in the pursuit and worship of the highest beauty, he forgot for a time his waywardness and fitfulness. With her by his side he paused to examine reverently objects which he had before deemed but worthy of a hasty glance, and, not taking in all their significance, had given up as exaggerated in their renown. Thus, entering St. Peter's one day, he remarked that he was disappointed in its size.

"Come and sit under the dome, and do not think about it," said Margaret to him, "that is the only way to realise its vastness. The sense will steal gradually upon you. One seems to imbibe it as the flowers do the light, without effort on one's own part."

"The flowers, by their subtle chemistry, turn the light into colour," he said, laughing, "much as you do who excel so in colour in your painting, and yet wear only black and white yourself. You see, I have

been talking to your master, and learnt your good and bad points. He never had so promising a pupil, he tells me, for colour; but he would almost despair of your drawing correctly were you of a less painstaking disposition. And yet you agree with me in ranking Form above Colour."

"Perhaps it is because I feel my own deficiency," she answered; "yet I always find that I prefer an engraving or photograph of a good painting to the painting itself."

"I think I know the reason of that," said Maynard.

"It is because the drawing is better than the colouring, even with the best masters. I, too, prefer a picture in light and shade to a coloured one, possibly because the imagination supplies the tints better than the artist can do it. Your master says that your sense of harmony in colour, is one of the finest he ever knew. This may account for your being easily dissatisfied."

"I fear it is the same with me in music," she said, "for it makes me so painfully fastidious. Nurse says she always despaired of getting any clothes to suit me, I was so hard to please about the colours. It was a vast relief to her when I declared that in future I would wear nothing but black and white. She tells me I shall have a terrible time of it, if ever I go into the world, being so conscious of a jar. Now look round, and see if the building has not grown upon you while sitting quietly here, so as to impress you far more with a sense of its grandeur than if you

had been running about from one part to another, and trying to see it all in a little time. It always seems to come to me as I sit still and muse."

"It is more my way," said Maynard, "to hunt down what I want, than to sit with folded hands and wait patiently for it to come to me. And that I take to be the main distinction between the masculing and feminine elements in nature."

"Can this glorious building ever perish like the rest?" exclaimed Margaret suddenly. "Yesterday, while at the Baths and Coliseum, your description of the games and recreations of old, brought the busy, crowded scenes before me so visibly, that ancient Rome began to live again. But even their mighty strength and massiveness failed to preserve them. Surely it is that in Christianity we have a condition of indestructibility. It cannot perish like the old faiths. Its triumphs are eternal as its truth. Yet you used the phrase 'later revelation' in the Vatican, as if one revelation had already given way to another. And if so, why not this? The thought of such perpetual unrest is so saddening, as if the world were to be always striving, never attaining."

"You are too young yet, surely, to feel the weariness of the pursuit," returned Maynard. "The hopefulness that springs for ever in the youthful breast will keep you for a long time yet from fainting by the way."

"I am not so sure of that," returned Margaret.

"I am not situated like other girls. I have hardly ever known any of my own age. Life is a complete mystery to me; and I think, sometimes, that I should like to retire altogether into some peaceful convent, if only for the sake of sociability. I often talk with the nuns here, and amid their good works and cheerful devotions they seem to live happily enough. They tell me that I could join them and still work at my painting and music."

Her companion did not immediately speak after Margaret had thus given utterance to what were evidently her inmost feelings. His ready and subtle penetration enabled him to perceive that the confidence had been unwittingly drawn from her by the place and the circumstances, and that she would have shrunk from exposing her sense of the isolation of her existence had she been made aware by any remark of his that she had done so. Being so much by herself she had acquired a habit of communing with herself, and, so, frequently expressed aloud feelings which she would not have revealed to anybody. Maynard perceived this, and often forebore to take direct notice of her utterances. He preferred dealing with them without letting her suspect that she had herself prompted him.

The rare faculty of sympathetic insight with which he was endowed, a faculty which is capable of being as great a curse as blessing to its possessor, always impelled him to effect the changes which he deemed desirable in anyone's opinions or feelings, by the exhibition of the opposite view in a favourable light, without any palpable or obtrusive antagonism. His plan in dealing with transgressors was ever to exhibit the right instead of denouncing the wrong; and with the sorrowing to dissipate sadness by the presentment of cheerfulness. The contrast of his own life and habits would, he believed, best counteract in the present case, the growth of feelings which he considered to be unhealthy in themselves, and which in some way as yet undefined to his mind, seemed to darken, by anticipation, his own future life.

Not that Maynard had any day dreams even about his own future. The position of a fellow of a college, to whom a moderate ease and competence are assured on the almost sole condition of abstinence from marriage, is not one to encourage other than purely intellectual ambitions. Should such an one become possessed by a desire to quit his celibate condition, his sole resource whereby he can retain his livelihood, is by taking orders or accepting a college living. James Maynard was one of the many who had strained a point so far as to take his degree in order to obtain his fellowship, but he would not take orders, or commit himself to a charge of souls. A passive assent to the dogmas of the church might be given once for all, but a lifelong call to inculcate them was quite another matter. Unless, indeed, Love should come in to dissolve the scruples which nourished

celibacy. Such a solution Maynard, though he had witnessed it in others, had never deemed possible for himself. With a passion for freedom both in habit ' and in opinion, he could not brook the idea of being bound to any one locality or phase of life and thought. He had therefore gladly availed himself of that charming form of endowment called a travelling fellowship, which he could hold for a term of years untrammelled by any irksome conditions; and henceforth he considered himself vowed to celibacy. His peculiar circumstances and organisation prevented him from regarding such a destiny as one that involved any hardship. Of domestic life he was absolutely ignorant. His habit of body was austerely ascetic, and that of his mind lay far away from wedded possibilities. So that, while enacting the part of friend and elder brother to Margaret at this time, it was by no means with the idea of forming her to be the fate of his future life; and this, rather because the future gave him no concern whatever, than because such an idea would have been repugnant to him had it been possible for him to entertain it.

CHAPTER VII.

AT length, breaking in upon the reverie in which Margaret was lost, Maynard said,—

"It is curious to mark the numberless phases of life through which we may pass, and yet all the time retain our own identity of being and character. quite feel with you the influence of this place, and recognise its idea as an eternal and luminous crystal of religion. Yet, as I sit here under the noblest of manmade domes, I am not so altogether dominated by it but that I can, in imagination, wander away into the wild open far-off countries, where I have lived for months together with no dome above me but that of heaven, and naught but living nature around me. There, as a humble student of nature, knowing something of botany, of geology, of astronomy, of history, I have found it impossible to believe in the eternity of forms. Whether it be plant or animal, man or mountain, yea, or the great globe itself, all show themselves subject to change. Conditions ever control being, and conditions are by no means a monotonous repetition of themselves. Man's purpose in art is even less to imitate nature than to perpetuate an imitation of it

in an enduring form. It is true that life is one, but its manifestations must change with its conditions. Thus, immutability is no proof of vitality. In every department of nature, in the operations of the mind, in manners, in life national, social, or individual, crystallisation is death. History does not exempt even Faith from the general law. The instant any party or person claims the finality of infallibility, his doom is indicated. He ceases to be in harmony with his surrounding conditions. I love to rejoice in the beauty and fitness of things as they spring up in harmony with the world. The conviction of their transitoriness rather enhances their beauty in my sight, and impels me to wonder by what new variety of beauty they will be succeeded."

"When you used the phrase 'later revelation,'" said Margaret, "I did not quite understand its connection with what we were talking about. It seemed as if you regarded the older religions as an earlier revelation. Did you mean that there was in them anything divinely communicated?"

"Do you remember," asked Maynard in return, "how indignant you were as we roamed over the Coliseum and the Baths of Caracalla, at the wanton destruction of those magnificent edifices? Yet half modern Rome is built, not only on the very site, but with the very materials of the ancient city. It is the same with its religion. It has laid all previous religions under contribution as, of old, Imperial

Rome laid the rest of the world. And much of what exists here now will form part of that which

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haps you don't know that your name indicates you a scion of the ancient race of the Varinghians, or Varini, as Tacitus calls them; and the hypothesis

receives confirmation from your type and colouring. Starting from no one knows where, spreading, by force of their energy and intelligence, over nearly all Europe from the North Cape to the Mediterranean, the Warings were once a large family, surpassing all the other Scandinavian races together in the extent of the country they dominated. But they gradually became subdivided, and merged in races which had either been subordinate to them, or which rose in energy as they subsided, until now their vestiges are to be found only in names such as that of the 'Waring-Sea,' which only a thousand years ago the Baltic was called, the 'Varanger Fiord,' and others beginning with War, Var, or Wer, of which you will find numbers in your maps of England and Germany; and in a certain type of humanity which I venture to think finds a not unworthy representative in yourself."

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"I never heard so much of my ancestors before," said Margaret. "I always felt as if I belonged to nobody. I shall feel more at home in the world now. I hope they were a noble race."

"They were indeed; such great warriors as to suggest the idea that the word War came from them, and distinguished by a remarkable faculty for governing others in such a way as to make others like being governed by them. They, or their immediate kindred, made themselves very much at home here in Rome, long before you followed their example."

"And what argument were you going to draw from my family?"

"I was about to say that a religion, like a race, starts from a single germ or idea, and undergoing accretion or growth, conquers, destroys, and supersedes, or modifies, adapts, and appropriates other religions; and, after its culmination, duly decays, and gives place in turn to something new; yet leaving, perchance, like your own race, one fair idea to bless the ages to come."

"Thanks," said Margaret, smiling, "that is very pretty, but is not the idea a very sad one?"

"Who shall say," resumed Maynard, "how far the same history is enacted by religions, countries, races, planets, and even solar systems themselves? All may dissolve and leave, I will not say 'not a wrack behind,'—there I differ from the poet; I disbelieve in the destructibility of anything, of even a thought, —but leave a germ, idea, or cell of greater capacity than had before been possible, as a worthy result of the whole previous universe of being. In the meantime, the grand moral duty of all things is clear: 'increase and multiply;' 'work while it is day.'"

"It seems to me as if you took pleasure in contemplating the passing away of everything that man has been accustomed to love and venerate."

"Only in so far as it gives place to something better, or better suited to him. I cannot conceive a time when the hills will cease to wear away under the influence of sun and rain, the valleys to fill up, the ocean to fret the shores, and the rivers to carry their sediment to the sea. Yet I do not believe in a dead level ever being reached in the world physical or the world mental, for thus there would some day be an end to the possibilities of a higher life than that of the marsh monsters. All that now exists would change and degenerate into, or at least give place to, those lower forms, which are best fitted to thrive under such conditions. Such retrogression, indeed, occurs in places, and is a necessary corollary to the idea of advance and development. Whether the change be towards a higher and more complex, or a lower and more simple organisation, the first to dwindle and perish will be that which has the smallest faculty of adaptation to the new conditions.

"Man has a faculty beyond that of all other creatures, for modifying the conditions under which he lives. His circumstances, political and social, are for the most part of his own permission. Too often his ignorance and incompetence induce him to accept in modification of his difficulties solutions which involve fatal errors. But these are but a condition of his retrogression. Thus in this very land the fear of over-population has led to myriads of men and women turning monks and nuns. Whereas, under a healthy spirit of enterprise they might be actual producers of wealth, instead of mere useless con-

sumers; and be leading lives really virtuous in the education of happy families."

"What! is that the motive of the religious houses? I thought it was that they might be free to worship God."

"They are little else than gigantic poor-houses," returned Maynard; "though the superstitious fears of their inmates have been played upon to make them think they have a better chance of saving their souls by shirking the duties or, as they deem them, the snares of life, than by serving God as useful citizens with active brains, busy hands, and loving There is only one rule for judging of all hearts. these things," he added, seeing that he had succeeded in producing in his companion's mind the disturbance "If I want to ascertain whether which he desired. any principle or practice be right, I look to its fitness for aiding humanity on the path towards such perfectibility as it is capable of. So long only as it coincides with the requirements of the most advanced reason and utility, does it show itself to be intended by God to stand. There is no standard for man out of man."

"You judge everything by the standard of the future. What becomes of the 'good old paths' then?"

"It is not the really old, but the intermediate that I am decrying, when the promptings of Nature and Truth were superseded through the selfish artifices of those who wanted to exercise power over their fellows."

"I cannot accept your explanation of monasticism, and I do not wish to," said Margaret, with animation. "You seem to reverse everything, so that things appear to me as if I saw them with my head downwards. See how curiously yonder priests eye us, sitting here so long. Had we not better go now?"

As they were passing towards the great entrance, Maynard said, "Perhaps their instincts enable them to scent heresy from afar, for doubtless they would not recognise my ideas as quite orthodox; although if everything had been unchangeable Rome and its system would never have had existence. But you are right about monasticism. I gave but the church-statesman's reasons for encouraging celibacy, and not the devotee's motives for practising it. But I can hardly bring myself to do them justice. Humanity has so little place in the consideration of monks and nuns, except as a thing to be repudiated; and I am almost a Greek in my love of it. It is Greek and not ecclesiastical Rome that has won my love. Greek in her crumbling temples, the Greek in the sculptures of her galleries, for me, outweigh all the The Greek was the real half-way house between the primitive world and the future. Nearly all that was good in the Latin was derived from it, just as all the best sculptures in Rome are either by Greek artists or imitated from the Greek; and even now, in

order to attain excellence, it is necessary to follow them. Their language, their literature, their legends, still dominate the Western world, and will do so yet more when what is called Latin Christianity shall have vanished from its place in men's minds, and the old original gospel of humanity will shine out unobscured by the clumsy figments of the West. But I am always forgetting that I am talking to a young lady of seventeen. The fact is, you make so good a listener that you encourage me to run on as if you were not here at all. What a quantity of unintelligible stuff I have been talking to you."

"Oh, I don't at all expect to understand everything at first. It is so new to me to have any interpreter beside my own fancies. I don't know whether you intended it, but you have made il Duomo look less to me than it did before, and I cannot tell whether it is by a darkening or an enlightening process."

"A little of both, probably," said Maynard, laughing, as they went out into the piazza. "A sudden influx of light has at first much the same effect as its withdrawal; we must get accustomed to it. The dawn of new knowledge must ever be gradual."

"I shall never hear the word dawn again," said Margaret, "without thinking of our visit to the Villa Borghese. I had often looked at Bernini's lovely group of Apollo and Daphne without in the least understanding it, until your remark, 'and so the sunshine ever follows the dawn,' revealed the hidden meaning; and then I saw the dawn growing into day, and the earth breaking into flowers before the advancing sungod."

"The various aspects of Apollo," observed Maynard, "well illustrate the various effects of the sun's force. In your once favourite Belvedere, you see him merciless in his severity, capable of inflicting deadly sunstrokes, and blasting the produce of the earth. But with the Daphne he has all the tenderness and beneficence of a genial season."

"But did the Greeks themselves rationalise their myths in this way?" asked Margaret.

"Some of their thinkers did, as you will, I hope, some day learn from Plato. But it is through the labours of our Oriental scholars that we have got most of our light on the subject. Here is an instance. The very word 'dawn' is Sanscrit, and has the same derivation as Daphne; and they could hardly have adopted the name and the fable without comprehending their meaning. I was referring to the eastern element in the Greek when I spoke of it as the halfway house between the old world and the new. of the greatest defects in our knowledge which remains to be made good, is in the links which connect the various parts of the world's history. The one-sidedness that rejects the study of all except one particular view and period, is fatal to real Catholicity. I do not know whether it is through ignorance or some shallow prudential motive, that the meaning of so small a

matter as the wax altar-candles is veiled from the worshipper. But for my part, if I were a Catholic, I should conceive a far greater veneration for the rites of my religion when I learnt that they are derived from a worship far more universal than Catholicism, and older than any period recorded in history."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Margaret.

"Yes, and true, for they belong to the earliest periods of Nature-worship when all vivifying force as represented by the sun was adored under the forms of the column, or the obelisk, and the flame. The former was ever the symbol of Phœbus Apollo. In the lighted candle you have a combination older than Zoroaster and the Parsees, and recognised by Abraham and the patriarchs, as part of the only really Catholic worship that ever existed or will exist."

"You have made the religion of the place look small now, as well as its cathedral," said Margaret, as she bade him good-bye.

Thus talking, Maynard sought to win Margaret from her tendency to a religiousness that ignored nature, to a wider appreciation of the meaning of life. He used much reserve and caution in his exhibition of the facts which he had collected in the course of his studies, for he perceived that while her high religious instinct led her to sympathise with all noble results, she would be revolted by any near view of the bare basis of things. He hoped to widen the

range of her affections by showing her that in the affections all religion had its origin, and that one idea has pervaded all the modes in which man recognises and adores his Creator. He thought to arouse in her the sense of human love, and sanctify it for her by showing it to be the agency whereby the universal underlying consciousness gradually develops into the idea of God. Could Margaret once be led to regard it as but a morbid or factitious spirituality which fails to find its basis in physiological fact, she would, he thought, shrink from the life towards which she seemed to be drifting—the life of the convent. was not conscious of having any selfish reason for his solicitude; but could not endure that the idea of her in his mind should be marred by association with incompleteness or failure.

Maynard's method of procedure in his attempt to open the heart of a girl may have been a strange one, but his peculiar character and education, living as he had ever done in total ignorance of all domestic association, made it natural to him. He knew of no avenue to the heart save through the intellect. Even the sense of natural affection had been so early repressed as to have died out. Any approach to curiosity about his parentage had been so effectually rebuked by his guardian, that it had become a second nature with him to regard the subject as involving a fairly forbidden mystery.

CHAPTER VIII.

Thus during James Maynard's month in Rome he almost daily walked and talked with Margaret: not careful always to be within her comprehension so long as he knew that he was accustoming her to a larger view of things than was consistent with a total selfabandonment to the devotional spirit which had for her hitherto pervaded the place, and inspired all her The life of this fair girl had ever lain so far apart from intercourse with others of her own age. that the thoughtful and serious side of her nature had attained an unusual predominance. The faculty of playfulness, the cultivation of which is essential to a complete and healthy development of all the mental and physical powers, was as yet in almost total abeyance. Her nearest approaches to it had been in the companionship of Maynard, as when together they roamed gaily over the hills and vales of the Neckar, or now when her spirits became exhilarated amid the glories of the Campagna, as on their pic-nic excursion to the Grotto of Egeria, when James insisted on confounding the mythologies, regarding Margaret as Proserpine, and decking her with a profusion of the maidenhair fern which she had been gathering from the fountain consecrated to Numa's Nymph; himself with his long dark hair as gloomy Dis, and good nurse Partridge as her mother-earth Demeter. Or, again, when making a pilgrimage to the temple of Vesta, that overhangs the cataract of Tivoli, he had won from her contagious laughter, as, in compliance with the custom of the place, he ordered "four paulsworth of waterfall" to be turned The dame more than once expressed to James her delight at seeing her young lady so cheerful, and said she hoped it would keep fancies out of her head. for what with always painting religious pictures and visiting churches and convents, she feared she would become too much in love with a dismal life ever to be happy like other people.

As his time drew near for returning to England, he sought to learn her exact position and intended destination in the world; but the dame either could not or would not divulge anything beyond that her guardian found it convenient to leave them in Rome since the death of his sister Lady Primavera, who had taken them there, and that she could not at all say what plans he had in store for her.

James left Rome resolving not to lose sight of Margaret, for whom he felt all of, at least, a brother's regard, and cherishing a new and grateful feeling of delight as he thought over the pleasant picture made by the group of which he had formed a member. The tall slim girl in her simple black and white dress, with her fair abundant hair escaping from beneath the shelter of her wide straw hat, and her earnest grevish-blue eyes and grave expression; the dame with her careful motherly aspect; and the contrast they must all three have made in the eyes of bystanders. He felt very grateful to the dame for the free intercourse she enabled him to have with her charge. He had half feared that she would have thought it her duty to her employer to have made difficulties, and thrown obstacles in the way of their frequent meeting. But she had no reason for so interfering to restrict their liberty. It is true that as an old retainer of Lord Littmass's, she was entirely dependent on him, but she had known both James and Margaret from infancy; she understood their characters, and, moreover, was acquainted with the secret of James's birth. And as to her master, he had given her no instructions whatever about Margaret, no hint of his intentions with regard to her, but merely told her to look after her, and see that she got some education, and to spend as little money as possible.

The peculiar position of the old woman had given her a certain indeterminateness of manner which puzzled strangers, and led them to doubt her genuineness. Aware that she knew more of Lord Littmass's affairs than he would like to know that she knew, she cultivated a habit of silence, and so escaped the risk

of gossiping about his secrets. She had, moreover, heavy bitternesses of her own early life, which she was resolved to bear in silence; and the air imparted to her demeanour by these recollections, combined but inharmoniously with her real kindliness and simplicity of character. Margaret's attachment to her nurse was one of unconscious habit, though not the less complete and well-grounded. For Margaret was absorbed in a world of her own, and one into which none other intruded. Devoid of that peculiar catechetical religious training, which is considered an essential part of education in England, she was troubled by no early instilled suspicion of evil, either in herself or in others. Alike ignorant of a mother's love, and of girlish friendships, she repined not at what she did not miss, and accepted her isolation as a matter of course. Thus she had grown up as a neglected flower in a lonely waste, yet by force of her own nature imbibing and assimilating to herself all sweet energies afforded by sun and atmosphere to her heart and brain; for Nature was a mother to her, and let no heavy cloud come nigh to overshadow her young life.

CHAPTER IX.

MAYNARD returned to England to leave it again on a scientific expedition which was to occupy him far from home, for at least twelve months. During this time he heard nothing of his young friend at Rome. Margaret, after his departure, resuming the usual course of her life, at once artistic and devotional, betrayed to the watchful eye of her nurse, no evidence of change such as might be looked for in a girl after being so much in the society of a man whom she highly esteemed, and who showed her so much regard. And the good dame, while acknowledging to herself the relief it was to have no complication of her responsibilities, yet sighed as she thought of future possibilities, and said to herself,—

"I don't know if Mr. James thinks of such a thing, but she certainly does not dream about a future for herself. And I doubt if she ever will. She is not one of the common sort. The society of girls of her own age is what she ought to have; and I have a great mind to let his lordship know it."

Margaret clearly had no thought of James in any of the ordinary human capacities. Her having known

him more or less all her life was against that. Familiarity may breed affection, but love is a sudden blow. She had come to regard him as a sort of meteoric friend, whose orbit brought him occasionally into contact with her sphere; and whom she always received with pleasure and parted from without regret. Had she been in the habit of analysing her relations with others, she would have discovered that the difference of their natures was so great as to make mutual sympathy in anything beyond mere intellectual respects impossible.

Several months passed after Maynard's departure from Rome, before the dame finally determined to write to Lord Littmass. Margaret's health had given way under the heats of summer, and she had in her lassitude conceived an overpowering weariness of life, and the longing to retire into a convent, to pray or to die, took irresistible hold of her. The nuns who at her entreaty came to see her, served, by their gentle kindness and apparent content with their lot, to strengthen her desire; and she prevailed on her nurse to write and ask her guardian's permission to enter a convent at least for a time. The dame would have been in despair, but for a faint hope that the reply would be a summons to return to England. To her inexpressible distress, a letter and a messenger arrived from Lord Littmass, saving that the measure had his full concurrence, and that under the advice and by the influence of an eminent Roman Catholic prelate, Miss

Waring would at once enter a Carmelite Convent in the centre of France.

It was useless for the old woman to meditate opposition to this mandate. Lord Littmass had evidently sent his agent to see the step carried out; and Margaret, though greatly disappointed at being unable to stay with the friends she had already made, so longed to carry her plan into execution, that she would not hear of any delay or remonstrance. It was November when they left Rome for France, and the dame half brokenhearted but somewhat comforted at the kindly demeanour of the Lady Superior, took leave of Margaret at the convent door, and returned to England.

It was in the early spring that the Bishop whose influence had gained her admission, called to visit the convent. Imagining from Lord Littmass's manner that he really had his ward's good at heart, he inquired for Margaret, and was shocked at the condition to which she was reduced. Believing that he was doing a friendly act by Lord Littmass, and moved also by a feeling of humanity, he sent for an eminent medical man of the neighbourhood to consult him about her. The Church was powerful in the provinces of France, whatever it might have been in the Capital. doctor looked wistfully at her, and felt her pulse; sounded her heart, her lungs; asked her a few questions in a tone so low as not to be overheard, and then glanced toward the Bishop, who was standing and talking with the Lady Superior.

- "Well, and what do you make out her complaint to be?" asked his reverence.
- "I should prefer prescribing without committing myself on that head," answered the doctor with a look which the Bishop seemed to understand, for he at once turned to the Lady Superior and said,—
- "I will not detain you from your sacred duties longer, Sister; leave us here and we will rejoin you shortly."

With ill-suppressed reluctance she left the cell, and the Bishop said,—

- "And what do you prescribe?"
- "Instant return to her home and friends."
- "No medicine?"
- "Beef-steak and port wine three times a day, and air, exercise, and sleep, at discretion."
 - "Why, what is her disease?"
 - "Have I your lordship's safeguard?"
 - "Most certainly."
- "She has a complication of diseases, any one of which must kill her if not arrested at once."
 - "And they are-?"
 - "Cold, starvation, and dirt."

The Bishop, glad to return his obligation to Lord Littmass, who had entertained him nobly when in England, took upon himself to send Margaret to the doctor's own house to be taken good care of, and wrote to tell her guardian what he had done, and to urge her immediate return home. Lord Littmass, who thought that he had got rid of her for ever, concealed his chagrin, thanked the Bishop warmly, and dispatched Dame Partridge to bring Margaret home.

They came by slow stages, halting often on the way; and when they reached England, the poor girl had made considerable progress in regaining her health and strength. Lord Littmass was absent from London, and she lived quietly at his house under the superintendence of her kind old nurse, nourished by good food, and the fresh air of the Park, with nought to disturb or retard her recovery.

CHAPTER X.

James Maynard returned from his scientific expedition shortly after Margaret reached home. He was a man of abrupt habits, little given to letter-writing, or to apprising others of his intentions or movements. This peculiarity, no doubt, arose from his believing that no one was interested in him or his doings. Lord Littmass was the only person to whom he ever dreamt of giving any account of himself, and he had no reason to suppose that Lord Littmass cared to hear from him, or to know of his coming, until he should actually appear before him. Consequently, when he arrived in London, it was without any intimation to his guardian that he was coming, or likely to come. Neither did Lord Littmass expect him so soon.

James, therefore, on calling at the house in Mayfair, found that his lordship was absent, and might not return for a fortnight. He found, also, that Miss Waring was in town; and learning that she had gone out to walk in Kensington Gardens, he started off to look for her.

Margaret was sitting under one of the noble chesnuts when James discovered and went up to her. The contrast between them was greater than ever. He, with skin embrowned, his dark hair long and wild, and his general bearing rugged from the wild open-air life of many months in a tropical climate. She, drooping, and paler than ever he had before seen her, yet more matured in expression, more womanly in dress, softer in tone, and less abstracted in manner. She greeted him with a glad smile that, for the moment, chased all the wanness from her face, and Maynard felt his heart leap towards her in the full strength of his manhood, with a shock of conflicting emotions among which, love, compassion, and apprehension strove for predominance.

Thinking he was going to speak, Margaret remained silent as he sat down on the bench beside her; and looking up in surprise at his silence, she perceived that he was undergoing some powerful inward struggle which for the moment made speech impossible to him. Affecting unconsciousness she gave him time to regain his composure. Presently he spoke, though with a suppressed eagerness and determination in his manner altogether new to her.

"I have just returned from South America, and have, as usual, been to pay my respects to Lord Littmass. Finding him absent, I asked if Dame Partridge was still in Rome, hoping thereby to hear of you. They sent her to me. She told me you were here. She began telling me of your history for the past year, but I hardly listened, I was so

impatient to see you again. I think she said you had been very wicked, and had gone as a nun into a convent, but I hurried off, to hear your confessions from yourself. Are you really a nun?"

"Not quite," she replied, cheerfully, hoping, by non-observance of his strange nervousness, to enable him to get over it. "Not quite. Only a novice, on trial."

"Thank God!" he ejaculated solemnly, in a low tone.

"Margaret," he added, after a moment's pause; "what have you to do with Lord Littmass? I mean in what way, and to what extent are you under his authority?"

"I know not," she answered, surprised at his broaching a subject that was entirely new between them. "I have never thought of enquiring."

"You do not know if it was out of pure benevolence that he undertook charge of you when a child?"

"I believe there was some provision left for me by my parents, but of the amount or conditions I know nothing. I have always looked on Lord Littmass as a sort of distant father, who now and then condescends from his high occupations to legislate for me out of regard for my parents."

"And you mean to live on listlessly and aimlessly, regardless of the world and of society, of life and its duties, and not caring to use your womanhood, but

leaving your fate to the indifferent arbitration of this lordly providence!"

He purposely infused a tinge of bitterness into his words, for he judged such a tonic wanting to rouse her from her life of dreams. His being able to do this, proved him to be again master of himself, and superior to the emotion that had at first overcome him.

It was the first time Margaret had ever heard such a tone addressed to her by anyone. She started up as if intending to pour out a torrent of exclamations. Maynard inwardly rejoiced at the vigour of her attitude, thinking, "If she reproaches me, it is because she cares for me." But she spoke not until she had nearly resumed her former position, and then quietly and humbly.

"You used to tell me that I was an apt pupil. What is it that you wish to teach me now?"

James's self-command completely broke down before the unexpected and winning gentleness of this answer.

"Forgive me!" he cried. "I must be mad to speak to you so. Why will you force me to love you, when I have before told you of my unhappy position, which makes it impossible for me to fulfil my longing."

Margaret was speechless, but turned upon him a look so full of wonderment and pain that he at once perceived that the only consequence of his unguarded

utterance would be to deprive him of her friendship without converting it into love. Dreading such a result, he hastened to undo the effect of his words.

"We are both waifs," he said, apologetically. "Early alike orphaned and consigned to the same care; and it seems so natural that sympathy should exist between us, that I for a moment suffered imagination to outstrip reality. Will not the pupil forgive her repentant master?"

"I scarcely know what I have to forgive," said Margaret, "nor can I account for the pain I felt just now, unless it was because I saw you were moved far beyond my former experience of you. I owe you much gratitude and affection, and those you have freely from me. Beyond those I am unable to go. I am but as a child in the ways of the world, and know nothing of love or its meaning, except as toward my Maker. Our fates are alike in another respect than those you mentioned. For me as well as for you all is forbidden save a solitary life. For you by the external circumstances of your condition. For me by the constitution of my own nature. Such affection and respect as I can give are yours already. You will continue to be my friend, will you not?"

Her sweet tones and kindly words compelled his obedience. He replied, falteringly,—

"I will try to submit; but do not be hard upon me if vain hopes will show themselves. The new vision of life that has thrust itself before me cannot be dis-

missed at will. Tell me," he resumed, after a pause, "what is your destination? Do you remain with your guardian?"

- "I know not for certain. The doctors recommend country or sea air: and I believe he is looking for a retired spot where I can freely have both. I shall not know until he returns next week."
- "And, as I remain in town until then, you will allow me to walk here with you daily, will you not?" he asked, imploringly.
- "Oh yes, it will be dear old Rome again," she cried, evidently quite forgetting the last few minutes. "Only, no pictures, no sculptures, no churches; but this beautiful green turf, and these glorious trees, will supply food for talk. You were always my instructor. You shall here interpret Nature to me. I love its beauty more than ever since I left my cell," she said, with a shudder at the reminiscence.

Eagerly did Maynard apply himself to the task thus allotted to him during those few blissful days. For blissful they were to him, in spite of the limitation imposed upon him: not merely because it was happiness to him to be with her; but because he thought that through the interpretation of Nature, love might yet find an entrance into her heart. "It were a sin," he said to himself, "to suffer such a being as this to be wasted. With so much evil and ugliness ever springing up in the world, it is a sacred duty for the beautiful and the good to become multiplied. In this

alone lies hope for humanity. How can I win her: and, winning her, how maintain her? I will preach to her of life and its duties, as well as of its joys; and, by aid of my science, illustrate the common nature of all things. In the absence of a voice from the heart, perchance she will obey her conscience. The blasphemy which she committed against God and man by entering that accursed convent, shall be atoned by obedience to the divine laws of our being. The Girl must be taught to become a Woman; and I——I! how do I know that I shall benefit thereby, and not another? How, if I am educating her for another to win? decking the shrine for a stranger to worship at ?"

The thought struck through him like a sword; and, at one glance, the lightning-flash of jealousy revealed to him all the dread depths of feeling that lay at the foundation of his nature, never before suspected, never again, he trusted, to be thus lighted up.

"Oh merciful God!" he cried, in the intensity of his momentary anguish; "nevermore let me see myself thus; but let the very memory of this moment die, never to revive."

Deeply humiliated as James felt at the discovery he had made of the latent possibilities of his own nature, he learnt thereby the might of his passion for Margaret. The stronger that passion appeared to him to be, the farther it seemed to remove him from Margaret's sphere. Yet in this very unlikeness he found

room for hope. Utterly unable as she was to comprehend his feeling, she had no instinct that prompted her to shrink from him; and that which was denied to love, might she not yet yield to compassion? On any terms he would take her; and, this achieved, would not the rest be sure to follow in the train of such devotion as he would pay her?

Maynard fancied he was solving the mystery of Margaret's dissympathy. Of her perfection he had no doubt. That was an article of faith beyond dispute. It must be owing to some particular arrest of development, he thought, bringing his botanical knowledge to bear upon his analysis of her. "Can there be any physical weakness; any radical defect of health?"

Alarmed at the idea, he sought Lord Littmass's medical attendant, and introduced into his conversation an apparently casual remark about Miss Waring's extreme delicacy of constitution. He was a practitioner of the old school, shrewd and eccentric; but not disdaining new lights.

"She delicate!" cried the physician; "not a bit of it. Not a weak spot in her. If anything, she is too strong; too slow of development for the taste of an age that likes pace even in its women. A hardy plant, she does not shoot up into completeness one day to wither the next. Too much brain at the top of her head, perhaps, for most people; but with such a spine as hers to support it, there is

nothing to fear. A little of the real education of life will soon send the blood circulating through her whole system, and equalise her developments. I have great faith in people's spines. In one I can see beauty without strength, and in another, strength without beauty. But in hers I find them combined in a very rare degree. Sir, the spine is the basis of the character physical and moral. that delicate thread which runs throughout its entire length, and culminates in the brain, protected against the chance of injury as no other part of the body is, there resides the moi, or individual selfhood: and thence radiate all the nerves and their emotions. Why, there is scarcely a twist of opinion but may be traced to its corresponding curve in the spine. Only the other day a lady came to consult me about her daughter, who was taken, she said, with some strange religious fancies. "Tell me no more, madam," I said, "but let me examine her spine." I did so; and said at once that I should not be surprised to find that she was inclined to join the sect of Plymouth Brethren. Her mother was astonished, and owned that she was attached to a clergyman who had entered that very communion. Another time I was examining the back of a girl whose parents are strict Protestants; plain, downright, matter-of-fact people, alike incapable of logical sequence, and devoid of imagination. Well, their two positives had produced a negative; and the daughter's back-bone was the natural re-action from the parents' self-opiniatedness. The vertebræ lacked consolidation, and indicated a total absence of self-reliance. I cautioned them that if they treated her injudiciously, and did not give her plenty of healthy exercise for both mind and body, she would be sure, some day, to turn Roman Catholic. They considered themselves so insulted by the suggestion of such a possibility for a daughter of theirs, that they never called me in again. The girl, however, some time afterwards, left her home and joined a Sisterhood."

Maynard obtained another testimony to the perfection of Margaret's spinal column. The dame told him that at Paris, on their way home from the convent, it was necessary to employ a dress-maker; and that this personage was so struck, first, by the young lady's extreme look of delicacy and emaciated frame, and then by the unexpected straightness and regularity of her spine, that she exclaimed,—

"Ah, mon Dieu! quel ange! such a back must not be let to grow wings before its time."

To draw Margaret from the life she dwelt apart, pure, luminous, and dreamy as a star in its halo; her imagination fixed on the vague ideal suggested by the beautiful things of earth;—this was the task Maynard had now set himself. He saw that she was one whom nought unlovely touched, or, at least, soiled; for she had no perception of the contrary

of beauty or goodness. She was a very sensitive plant in this respect, shrinking and closing at once in presence of all that was unsympathetic to her; but opening, as to her whole nature, to the influence of the genuine and pure. Such power had their attraction over her imagination, that she could have gone as a martyr to the fire, rapt in unconsciousness of the external, and subduing torment by faith in the unseen.

Fully understanding that she dwelt in a charmed circle, into which nought that was not of the loftiest could enter, Maynard forced beneath the control of his intellect the love that burnt and raged within him; and sought for a process whereby he might unconsciously to her transform her sense of passive beauty into one of duty, her sympathy with the abstract into a personal feeling. To achieve this, he thought, it would be well to disclose to her more fully the nature of the world of which she was an individualised portion, and convince her that she would be attaining a truer harmony with it by adding the beauty of Doing to that of Being.

James felt that as a man he was not unworthy to be entrusted with even her affection; but he might have despaired of winning it, had he been less of a natural philosopher. On his knowledge that the laws of attraction are to be brought into operation by the conjunction of affinities, as well as by the exhibition of opposites, he founded his hopes of success. Mar-

garet must be won from the abstract to the concrete, as a soul from heaven to earth, without having the tender susceptibilities, of which her ethereal nature was composed, scared by contact with too gross an element. Maynard felt that it was necessary to lay the foundations of his achievement in the brief interval that remained before their guardian's return.

He had a conviction that Lord Littmass was averse to his holding any acquaintance with Margaret, though the grounds of that conviction were of a merely negative kind,—principally the seclusion in which she had been kept, the absence of any reference to her in conversation, and the demeanour of her old nurse. T_0 Margaret herself it never occurred that anyone was specially influencing or controlling her life. lived as flowers live, enjoying the bounties of light, air, and shower, and giving out beauty and fragrance in return, but knowing nothing of a hand that tended her; and James was careful not to suggest that in being intimate with him she might be opposing and thwarting her guardian's wishes respecting her. read her well enough to be aware that while to support misfortune and suffering she would bring the strength of an immortal, yet beneath a sense of wrong done by her she would inevitably droop and wither away.

His object in the conversations which he held with her during this interval was to reveal to her his view of the meaning of the Universe, and the necessary and intimate relations between its material and its spiritual, its physical and its mental parts; and to show her that it could attain its highest development only by all portions of it fulfilling their part in the general advance, and living up to the greatest capacity of their natures.

"Nature," he said, "leads no merely desultory existence, content to enjoy and to be admired of itself; but is ever working as well as being, unfolding new possibilities, and advancing toward higher results. We are told that each night that closed a day in the history of Creation was followed by another day in which a fresh step was made towards perfection: that even geologic catastrophe and desolation have conduced to the production of higher and more complex forms of life. And if growth be the inherent law of nature in respect of material and non-sentient existence, who can doubt that it is to be equally predicated of the moral, the intellectual, and the emotional world, which is the object and highest result, the flower and fruit of the physical universe? Crystals have their beauty and their use, certainly, but they are sterile and unproductive, and I should be sorry to see you content with being one of the crystals of humanity."

"Yet they are immortal and have no trouble or fatigue of existence," said Margaret, sighing. "I suspect that my heaven is one of rest, rather than of progress or movement. But pray do not think that I

claim to have reached perfection. I am only really unconscious of a want. If nature has omitted to supply me with the impulse to activity which animates the rest, does that not indicate that my special function is to rest and be thankful?"

"It is a common attempt at compliment to tell a woman that she is an angel," returned Maynard, laughing. "Now, I hold the angel to be the inferior of the two, and would promote you to be a woman. The sense of human duty is above that of abstract perfection. It educates the individual for the benefit of all. If we were intended for a passive and merely contemplative existence, it might be different; but having human powers and affections, we are clearly out of place while inert and indifferent. God works in and through the human mind and emotions as much as in other departments of existence. But, perhaps, I am forgetting that you have been ill, and need a long sleep of mind and feeling to renovate you for the real work of life, the work which brings the highest reward and enjoyment, the work of fulfilling one's nature."

"You are very good to find an excuse for my indolence," said Margaret; "but, tell me, I hope all your own affairs have gone as you wish?"

"I have nothing beyond my studies to occupy my interest," returned Maynard, "and whenever I work they go on. My fellowship provides me the means of living, but it also cuts me off from the ordinary hopes

and ambitions of men. As a college fellow I may say with the Fiend in 'Festus,'

'I know

Nor joy nor sorrow; but a changeless tone Of sadness like the night wind's is the strain Of what I have of feeling.'

If I have not reproached you for entering that convent, it is because I have no right to cast a stone on such account, who have myself virtually taken a vow of renunciation of love and manhood by partaking of an endowment based on the same monastic principle. Hailing all light as I do, I scarcely feel glad to have the veil removed from my eyes, now that it is possibly too late to change my career."

"Yet such a life as yours must have many consolations," said Margaret. "You used to speak of its exemption from care and anxiety, and the freedom to follow your own bent whithersoever it might lead you."

"Excepting in one direction. There is a time appointed unto men," said James, solemnly, "to contemn the selfishness of isolation, and yearn for the sympathies of human ties. Were we but mere intellects, the life would be perfect. As it is, the awakening to the consciousness of our complex natures brings only agony and regret, against which we can only strive by rushing into fresh activities."

- "What is the usual mode of escape?"
- "Taking a college living when about fifty years of

age, and compensating a wasted manhood by teaching catechisms to ploughboys: unless in the rare instance of marrying a woman who has money enough for two, or more."

CHAPTER XI.

So James Maynard met and conversed with Margaret Waring in the interval before the return of Lord Littmass to London. Ever studying the problem how to bridge the gulf which divided their natures, and lead her gently over to his own side; ever watching narrowly her every change and growth, he sometimes thought he could perceive a gradual advance in her ideas towards the more real and practical interests of life; or, at least, an increase of sympathy with himself in his philosophic enquiries and practical pursuits, if not a more personal regard and readiness to sympathise with his regrets at the hopeless bondage of freedom with which he was tied.

"She can pity if she cannot love," was his verdict upon her. "My best hope is in making myself familiar and necessary to her. Let me continue to be to her more and more as a friend and brother, and perchance habit will do the rest."

But though he contrived his demeanour so as not to arouse suspicion of any personal ulterior object, he strove in vain to hide from himself the thought of his real position. The habitual receipt of an easy subsistence, "paid quarterly," does not sharpen men's minds in the matter of ways and means. James knew nothing of money-making. And he knew less of Margaret's position. If she was dependent on her guardian's bounty, Lord Littmass would probably be glad to get her settled; but this could only be by marrying her to some one able to support her; and that some one could not be himself, seeing that his sole means of subsistence vanished from him if he married. But of the two tortures by which he was racked, by far the worst was his doubt of her ever coming to really care for him.

After much debate with himself, James resolved to attain some certainty by speaking with Lord Littmass about her; and to lose no time in seeking an appointment in which his scientific knowledge and practical abilities would enable him to dispense with his fellowship. Even now was he engaged on an analysis of minerals for a mining company, whose territory he had lately visited in South America, for which he did not think of requiring payment. But henceforth he would seek regular employment of a remunerative kind. He would make himself independent of his fellowship; and he would present to Margaret the spectacle of a man of aspiration and capacity, whose life was being wasted and ruined for love of her. And he would obtain Lord Littmass's consent to their marriage; and if this was not accorded, well, they might dispense with it.

In this way did Maynard's resolution to hazard his whole life on the chance of winning Margaret rapidly take form and consistency, and assume the dimensions of an absorbing and overwhelming passion. and versatile as his mind was, he could not altogether conquer his habit of looking at all sides of a question. But when the thought did suggest itself to him that the difficulties were insurmountable, or that even if the longed-for result were the best that could happen to him, yet it might not be the best for Margaret and for her happiness, he thrust the suggestion from him with a fierceness that surprised himself, and revealed to him the existence of hitherto unsuspected depths in his nature. Love, whose very existence he had so long ignored, fastened its portentous grasp upon him, and, as if in revenge for its worship long neglected, made its relentless power felt through every fibre of his inmost being. All open and unprepared for its assault, it tore and raged through him, as the equinoctial blast among the defenceless pines on a mountain top, until it sent him to his knees in his agony, and he cried aloud as to an actual, conscious, personal tyrant, "Spare me, spare me, and I will win her."

Hastening, yet half-dreading, to meet her after such an accession of the delirium of his love, Maynard would feel the influence of her saint-like calmness steal over his spirit and sink into his soul, creating in him a mood which he recognised as the most blissful of his life, could he only have her by him to produce

So essential a part of herself did this intense repose and quietness of temperament seem to be, that he felt that the very eagerness and activity of sentiment which she was the means of arousing and stimulating in him, would excite in her a dissympathy and aversion. Yet, in spite of its overwhelming strength, so well did James learn to control all expression of his feeling since its first outbreak, that Margaret very soon entirely forgot that he had ever addressed her, save as the friend and brother he had always been to her. The idea of any man being in love with her, or of her marrying anybody, was so dim and remote that her imagination had failed to take it in, and to realise it as a possibility. And so long as James did not again betray himself, his return to his former accustomed demeanour put the momentary exception altogether out of her head.

CHAPTER XII.

THE return of Lord Littmass was looked to with very different feelings by James and Margaret. She, hoping, fearing, desiring nothing, was altogether indifferent on the matter. The utmost change it was likely to make in the routine of her life, was to impose occasionally a slight degree of formality upon it, or lead to her leaving London for the more congenial seaside; an event which Maynard did not yet venture to flatter himself would be accompanied by regret for him. He, on the other hand, hoped, feared, desired everything. At times he admitted to himself that Lord Littmass was omnipotent in all that concerned him. At others, he felt that he had it in himself to be the superior, by virtue of the energy of his character, the force of his will, and above all, by the power of his love for Margaret; and that by their aid he would turn any resistance that Lord Littmass might offer into a means of compliance.

The terms which existed between himself and his guardian were of such a character as to make it impossible to found any augury upon them. Lord Littmass was ever civil, brief, and cold, treating him

with a sort of peremptory suggestiveness that implied an expectation of compliance rather than a claim to obedience or affection. James had thus come to regard him in the light of an unwilling benefactor, who performed as a duty a task which was imposed upon him in virtue of some antecedent obligation.

Lord Littmass was a man who never betraved an emotion, or assumed a responsibility which he could escape. For many years he had had no intimates. His literary and political relations were alliances, rather than friendships. The general view of his life was that of a man somewhat morose and self-absorbed. but gifted with a large measure of artistic power and political insight, which he contrived always to use for his own self-advancement; a man, too, intensely proud and haughty. His demeanour and mode of life encouraged the idea that he had a solid foundation of wealth to sustain his position, and give him the weight that he undoubtedly had in the world. But to a certain extent he was a sham, and he knew it: and to this self-consciousness was in a great degree to be attributed his cold and distant demeanour towards most of those with whom he came into contact. Especially was this the case with James Maynard. Lord Littmass, while assuming the air of an immeasurable superiority, whether on the score of birth, of age, of wealth, of position, or of talent, was really in his heart afraid to encounter the keen perceptions of the son whom he refused to acknowledge. Proud of him and of his

abilities, he yet denied him his affection and society, because he reminded him of his hated marriage and disgraceful conduct: a marriage of which few persons were aware, and none of his immediate acquaintances living, except his cousin, Lady Bevan; and conduct, the full extent of the wickedness of which was known only to himself.

Such was Lord Littmass, and such were Maynard's relations to the man to whom he was about to reveal the inmost secret and longing of his heart, and from whom he had to court a rebuff on his tenderest point. But he had made up his mind to regard such a rebuff, should it come, as merely an obstacle to be conquered. He deemed himself bound to obedience by no tie of gratitude, since it was too clear that Lord Littmass's lofty patronage of him and supervision of his career derived their motive from some obligation that existed prior to and independently of his own existence. anticipating the reception his communication might meet with, he even determined beforehand on the demeanour he would assume; almost on the words he would use; a novel course for James Maynard, whose most obvious characteristic was the abrupt spontaneousness of everything he did. It proved that though mastered by his passion he was not paralysed; but could intently bend all his powers to the achievement of his paramount object; the sole mode of being mastered that proves true manhood, when all fears and anxieties are suppressed that may interfere with

the desired end; and all the faculties that can aid are kept on the alert, the resolve to succeed dominating the self-indulgence of weakness.

James felt that he was entering on the first great struggle of his life, before which all his previous emulations of school and college were as child's play; -with not merely a triumph or a money-reward dependent on the issue; not even the happiness of his life merely; but his whole character and usefulness for evermore as a man. Failure to win Margaret he felt meant failure of his whole career here, and perchance hereafter. It was his utter destruction as an individual. Between his love and his fear he was stirred to the very foundation of his nature, and compelled to own the very theory he had once most derided, the fact he had never realised. The consciousness that he was but the half of a human totality, even if true, might be endured; but the discovery of his other half, the completion and complement of himself, once made, and his intense yearnings to it once excited, nought henceforth but union with it could possibly make existence endurable. That such was the final cause of Margaret's existence also, he could not doubt, though he allowed that the revelation thereof had not yet been made to her. But attraction and affinity were things that could not be all on one side. Each particle of earth attracts the sun as much as each particle of the sun attracts the earth. The acid has as strong an affinity

for the alkali as the alkali for the acid. What are men and women but sun and earth; or as alkalis and acids, requiring only suitable conditions of electricity, temperature, or conjunction, to ensure combination?

CHAPTER XIII.

LORD LITTMASS was by no means a family man. He had no social intimacies with any inmate of his house. On the evening of his return he dined alone; and after dinner he sent for Margaret. He had seen her immediately after her return from the convent, when pale and thin from the Carmelite regime.

"Consumptive," he had then said to himself. "Poor child, it will save us both a good deal of trouble."

Looking at her now as she entered the room in obedience to his summons, and expecting to find written on her face the progress of the complaint that was to solve all difficulties, he started with surprise at seeing the improvement made during the month of his absence.

"Hectic? No, the colour must be a healthy one, for she has gained flesh and firmness of gait."

He addressed her kindly, and with a tinge of admiration in his manner.

- "London agrees with you, I see. Its murky skies have changed your lilies into roses."
 - "Thank you, I am much stronger since I came

here. I hope you are well, and have had a pleasant journey."

Lord Littmass scarcely knew which to admire most, the quiet self-possession with which she ventured to bandy compliments with him, or the sweet and steadfast tones of her voice. There was no longer the abstracted, pre-occupied air which he had accustomed himself to attribute to mental imbecility.

- "And what have you been doing with yourself?"
- "I have been very idle as to everything except getting well. The fine weather and a kind companion have tempted me daily into the gardens."
- "All the doctors in the world could not have done better for you. Idleness, air, and exercise will cure most maladies."
- "I scarcely seem to be idle when talking with one so full of information, and so ready to impart it, as Mr. Maynard."
 - "Whom did you say?" exclaimed Lord Littmass.
 - "Mr. Maynard."
 - "James Maynard,-my-my ward, that was?"
- "Yes, he is a great friend of mine; the only friend I have had to talk to. I hope you are not displeased?" she added, seeing the troubled expression of his face.

Lord Littmass quickly recovered his self-possession, and said:

"I was surprised because I did not know he was in England. I did not expect him to return just yet.

Yes, he is an exceedingly well-informed person, but I did not think that young ladies were much in his way."

"Then I must esteem his kindness to me the more——" began Margaret, and stopped, suddenly remembering what she had for some time quite forgotten, Maynard's outbreak of passion for her in the Park. Lord Littmass observed her embarrassment, but did not in the least appear to do so.

"I think," he said, "that I have discovered a place where you will pick up health still faster than in London. You do not dislike the sea, I suppose?"

"I love it dearly," answered Margaret, "and could listen for ever to its voice. I shall never forget the summer I spent by the Mediterranean with Lady Primavera. It was so delightfully lonely."

"You are fond of solitude? That will just do."

"It never seems to be solitude with the changeable yet constant sea for my companion."

"She does not speak as if she had any fancies about men in her mind," thought Lord Littmass. "I wonder what has happened. James is as much of a monk as this child is of a nun. I hope he has not discovered that he is unsuited for the vocation. It is most unlucky that they should have met thus, and will make it additionally difficult for me to carry out my plans in regard to her."

"I have been practising some of the convent chants which I learnt in Rome. You said that you would

like to hear them when I should be strong enough to sing," said Margaret. "May I try them for you now?"

He had forgotten all about the matter, but assented graciously, and Margaret sat down to the piano and commenced singing. Her voice was at first child-like and faltering, as if she were trying to remember a half-forgotten lesson. It then assumed volume and strength, as if she were becoming more certain of herself, and more forgetful of her audience. At length the notes poured forth, full, rich, and powerful, in all the exultant freedom of a rapt and glorying nature. On no familiar opera or hackneyed ballad did Margaret expend her powers. The chant she sang had never before been heard out of the convent where she had learnt it. Wild, weird, and quaint, it had been the special possession and glory of the sisterhood for many generations, and under its influence they had learnt to despise alike the good and evil of this world, and to realise beforehand the triumphs of that toward which their whole lives professed to be an aspiration.

Lord Littmass at first scarcely heeded the young and timid tones. They simply induced him to say to himself, "She is but a child, although so tall." Then, as the voice grew in strength, "The lungs seem sound. Those notes are more befitting her age." Then, when swelling into her full power, she seemed to him in richness of tone and purity of musical sentiment to surpass the best foreign artistes he had been

accustomed to engage for the delectation of his fashionable acquaintances, he turned round in his chair, and gazed at her with astonishment, and murmured,

"Why this is something new, indeed. Now she is a woman, with heart, voice, and feeling, far beyond either her years or her experiences."

She ceased, her voice dying away in softest cadences, as if full of a realised bliss which she feared to dispel by a sound. Her hands rested still upon the keys, and she seemed entirely forgetful of all things around her. She was back again in Rome, and beginning to shrink from the cell for which she had left it, when she was startled back into consciousness by the voice of her guardian, saying,—

- "Thank you. I like it immensely. I had no idea your voice was so strong, and, I may say, good. I am not surprised at the nuns wishing to get you among them. Did you sing at the French convent, too?"
- "No, everything was so different there, so gloomy. I should soon have died there, I believe."
- "Well, you may say good-night, now, and in two or three days you may be singing to the loud-resounding sea, as Homer calls it."
- "There," he said to himself, when Margaret had retired, "I have seen just enough of her to suggest a character that will exactly suit my new novel, 'Arrested Developments.' If I see more at present, the harmony of the picture presented to my mind

may be destroyed. Such is the function of Genius, from a part to imagine the whole, as the anatomist from a single bit of bone restores the entire structure. That, however, is rather memory than creation. Creation! pooh, the Artist does not create; he remembers, and he adapts. Yes, adaptation is the word. Genius is adaptation. Shakespeare is the greatest of adapters; though James gives the palm to the Emperor Constantine.—That girl's singing is a phenomenon. It represents the three eras of woman. It is worthy of an ode."

Then, after a little thought, Lord Littmass took out his note-book, and rapidly wrote down some lines.

"There, I think something of that kind will do to introduce with the character," he said, reading them "I don't much like that epitomising stanza. I should prefer 'Love' to 'Wife,' and perhaps 'Heart' is better than 'All.' No, the alliteration of 'Wife' is indispensable, though it is rather an anti-climax in sentiment. The public don't think so, however,-The 'All' is certainly best, poetically speaking; though, conventionally, it may be too comprehensive. However, the song points to matrimony, which is what the young ladies who sing ballads in drawingrooms want. I will get V--- to write one of her charming airs for it, and have it published separately as a song from Lord Littmass's new novel, 'Arrested Developments,' which will be a capital advertisement for the book. V- won't be able to help me with the words, though. True musician like, all words are the same to her. She values only the idea contained in them, and it is that which she seeks to express in her music. If they are too warm, however, she will find that out fast enough, and I can then use the cooler phrases. No, I have it. 'All' with a small a confines its reference to what immediately precedes it. Yes, that will do. Now for a fair copy of it.

'SONG.

'SHE SANG, AND---'

'She sang, and softly fell each word, So simple, pure, and sweet, As uttered by a holy child,— I fain would kiss her feet.

She sang, and older, statelier grown,
Like youthful queen she stands:
Her voice so noble, arch, and gay,
I fain would kiss her hands.

'She sang, and lo! her heart is found;
A woman, strong—and weak:
Such tenderness inspires each tone,
I fain would kiss her cheek.

'I fain would clasp her in these arms, She saint, and I the shrine: That as child, maiden, woman, wife, Feet, hands, cheek, all be mine.'

"I should like to hear Sophia Bevan sing those words. Fine creature as she is, I doubt if she would relish them. She and Margaret are as different as

earth and heaven, though each perfect in their kind. Never mind, I will dedicate the song to Sophia, and she shall introduce it to the London season. Thus in this modern age, does Art ally itself with Business."

Lord Littmass read over his verses once more, and then continued his musings, first about his ripening plot, in which Margaret, or rather the character suggested to him by Margaret, was to play a leading part; then on the young lady herself; and, lastly, by a sudden transition, on James Maynard.

"If she lives, I may have trouble with her," he "Would to goodness I could replace her fortune. If she goes on improving as she has done, and once appears in society, or is seen by her aunt, my position will become most awkward. Her death alone would have set matters right. should have inherited under her father's will, and none would have known that I had anticipated the reversion. I must keep her hidden now, more than ever. Why did I let her come away from that convent? Confound that meddling Bishop! And what does James mean by coming in my absence, and playing the civil to her? If once he takes into his head a fancy for marrying her, no consideration of prudence will stop him. What trouble I had to get him to take his degree and accept his fellowship. I don't believe he will ever take Orders to keep it beyond the seven years. 'Religious scruples. Did not believe enough of what he had to sign.' As if he wasn't already as good a christian as half the bishops; only he does not know it. I suppose he will call to-morrow, when I shall have to start him off on a new journey. Poor fellow, how little he thinks that I——:"

Here Lord Littmass's cogitations terminated in a sigh, after which he slowly rose from his seat, and, deep in thought, retired to rest.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN James Maynard called next morning, Lord Littmass received him with his usual manner, a manner whose predominant quality was of the kind that equally gratifies the subservient, and disgusts the independent of spirit, and goes by the name of "affability." It was the nearest approach to cordiality which Lord Littmass ever permitted himself to practise in his intercourse with men. His maxim was ever to be proud with men, and humble with women. To the constant observance of this rule he owed much of his success in society. It was not, as might at first sight appear, that he really despised men and honoured women. Rather, in his secret thought, were men beings to be feared, and women beings to be cajoled. His hauteur with men was a screen which he interposed between himself and a too scrutinising analysis. His humility with women, was, if a compliment at all, a compliment to their love of conquest. "Infallible as regarding their female sex," was the article on them in his creed. may take," he had said, "the twelve cleverest men that ever lived, and cast them into one man, and the

twelve stupidest women and cast them into one woman, and that woman will take in that man." Lord Littmass's affability, however, was lost upon Maynard, who looked upon it as an unpleasant habit, but one that concerned only the person who used it, and he ignored it accordingly.

After a few expressions of condescending interest in his recent visit to South America, and a few questions about the political and social condition of Brazil, and its eligibility for investments, Lord Littmass, who did not fail to observe that James seemed preoccupied and less at his ease than usual, took advantage of mention being made of mines, to ask him if he could easily qualify himself for undertaking a charge in respect of a certain mining company in which he was a proprietor, and if he would like to accept the commission in case it could be obtained for him.

- "Where is it situated?" asked Maynard.
- "In Mexico."
- "Would it suffice to replace my fellowship in case—in case circumstances prevent my retaining it?"
 - "In case you wish to marry, for instance?"
- "In case I wish to be free to remain a layman after its present term has expired, or in any other contingency."
- "Situations of trust connected with mines are always well paid," replied Lord Littmass. "But a Mexican *Real* is hardly the place to take an English gentlewoman to. Am I taking too great a liberty

in asking if you have met anyone in the Brazils who has tempted you into rebellion against the restrictions imposed by your fellowship?"

"Oh, dear no," returned James, forcing a laugh; "I at present aim only at being free. Other holders of fellowships marry when they succeed to college-livings. I feel debarred from this resource, and desire to place myself in an equally good position."

"Such cautiousness and precision are quite a new phase in his character," thought Lord Littmass. "It really looks as if he has a secret from me." Then he said, kindly,—

"You will allow that I have always been ready to aid you in life, and I am sure that you will not withhold your confidence whenever you think I can serve you: so I will not press you for it now. The matter on which I have to speak to you, is this. I and some others have been forming a provisionary partnership with a view to purchase and work some mines represented as very valuable, and lying at some distance to the north of the city of Mexico."

- "Guanaxuato, probably."
- "Yes, do you know the locality?"
- "Only by description."
- "Well, the working of these mines has been for several years in abeyance, owing, among other causes, to disagreements in the family of the proprietors. We propose in the first instance to dispatch an intelligent and trustworthy agent to inquire into the past history

and present condition of the property, in fact, to ascertain its actual value, together with the prospects and probable cost of re-opening it. The enterprise will require a fair knowledge of Spanish, a familiarity with minerals, especially silver ores, and the modes of extraction, a certain amount of engineering knowledge, and a general aptitude for, and shrewdness in business matters."

"The task is one that would suit me, and I believe that I should also suit it," said James; "but so far as I understand at present, the engagement does not necessarily involve continued employment, even should my preliminary investigation prove satisfactory."

"You will understand that I do not desire to force myself upon your confidence," returned Lord Littmass: "but I must observe that you appear to me to be aiming at being placed in a better position than your compeers, when you seek, at the age of seven or eight-and-twenty, a freedom which they rarely attain until forty or fifty. This is only comprehensible to me, on the hypothesis that you have not so completely escaped entanglement as you would have me to suppose."

James was struck by the whimsical turn the interview, of which he expected so much, had taken. He had come fully intending to speak openly to Lord Littmass. And now in proportion as Lord Littmass sought to force his confidence, the more firmly resolved

he became to withhold it. So in answer to the last appeal he said,—

"My lord, I grant and am grateful for all the kindness I have received from you. You are too conversant with human nature not to be aware that a man's character or constitution may in its growth pass through various changes, and prompt him to aspire to various ambitions or careers, for which, while detecting the aspiration, he is yet unable to assign the motive. Believe that I am passing through such a process, and humour the impulse if you will; and be assured, that whenever the time comes for me to own such a confidence, I shall deem it at once a duty and a privilege to lay it before you."

The seriousness and dignity with which he spoke convinced Lord Littmass both that it would be of no use to endeavour by direct questioning to sound him farther, and also that his own surmises were founded in fact; for if it were with a stranger that James was contemplating marriage there would be no reason for concealment from him.

The conversation was here interrupted by Lord Littmass being called to see a visitor in another room, and James employed the interval of his absence in reviewing his position. He had already resolved to wait until assured that Margaret reciprocated his attachment before giving his confidence to her guardian. But now it occurred to him that he might be acting wrongly in secretly endeavouring to win her

affections without affording Lord Littmass an opportunity of declaring himself for, or against his proposals. At one moment it seemed to be a duty to give him fair notice, and if Lord Littmass's objection was founded on no sound reason, he would try and win her in spite of him. And at another moment he thought that as Lord Littmass possessed no real parental authority over either of them, they had a right to arrange their own future for themselves.

It was under this final phase of his reflections that Maynard resolved to seek Margaret and learn his fate from her without taking her guardian into his confidence at all. Whatever might be her decision, the engagement in Mexico, a new element in the complication, would suit either emergency. If favourable, it might enable him to give up his fellowship and marry her. If unfavourable, it might save him from going mad by giving him active occupation at a distance from her. This last resolution was fixed by the reflection that, after all, the engagement might prove but a temporary one, as it would depend very much upon the report he would have to make respecting the property.

He had thus completed to his satisfaction the round of the reflections which crowded upon him, when a message was brought requesting his presence in Lord Littmass's study. Arrived there he was introduced to the chairman of the embryo company, of which Lord Littmass had spoken.

In addition to being uncle to Edmund Noel, Mr. Tresham was a name and a power in the City. His whole style and deportment indicated his consciousness of this fact. He was a fine man, of considerable and solid dimensions, and far advanced in the interval between middle and old age. His quick restless eye bespoke him a speculator by constitution, but the head that rose above it was of such conformation as to indicate the possession of sound and steady judgment. The kindly expression of his face and voice did not prompt the idea that he could on proper occasion exhibit such firmness and decision as really belonged to him. Estimating him at a glance, Maynard was somewhat surprised to find that an ally of Lord Littmass's could make so favourable an impression upon him.

Mr. Tresham was principally famous for the multitude of shares he held in various adventures in all parts of the world, and his reputation for sagacity and good fortune made him an authority in all speculative enterprises. He was the originator of the present scheme for re-opening the Real de Dolores, a once famous silver mine in the rich mineral district of Guanaxuato; and he had his own reasons for putting what might be a good thing in Lord Littmass's way. For the same reasons he was disposed to favour the appointment of Lord Littmass's protégé.

The table was covered with maps of Mexico, and plans of the property, and a variety of documents all in Spanish, which were duly pointed out to Maynard with a view to enabling him to understand exactly what was required of him.

"But a practical knowledge of ores and machinery is not what we require in the agent who undertakes this part of the commission," observed Mr. Tresham, in answer to some remarks of James's by which he showed that he was familiar with such matters. want in the first place rather a diplomat, and a man of legal acumen, to investigate on the spot the accuracy of the statements contained in these documents. system of falsifying Government returns and forging Government land warrants, has long prevailed, and to such an extent, that the very mine and tract of country represented here may easily have no existence whatever; and, if it exist, there may be no sound title with Again, the mine may have been closed on other accounts, than those adduced. Such, again, has been the unsettled state of Mexico for many years, that many a mine has been stopped to escape the forced contributions made by the Government of the day. These exactions however, we are assured, have been almost exclusively confined to native proprietors. The prospect of such ruinous interference being extended to foreign owners will be one subject for investigation. But the main points to be ascertained are the value of the property and the validity of the title. All else, though highly important, is merely collateral. Your labours, if you take the engagement, will commence in

the capital, where you will examine the family archives in what respects the mine, and the official government returns of which these purport to be an exact copy. The former are accessible on payment of a fee to the family lawyer who holds them in trust, and the latter of course are public property. This part of the mission, as you no doubt perceive, is one requiring some delicacy and tact, as well as an intimate acquaintance with the language. It will afterwards be your duty to proceed to the spot, and by aid of a competent staff to make the requisite examination."

"Tell me," said Maynard, who had kept his eye on the maps while listening to this speech, "have you got the plans of the adjoining estates, especially of those which lie on each side in the direction taken by the vein?"

"No; why?"

"Because these diagrams do not indicate how near to either limit of the property the lode lies or has been worked; so that we are in the dark as to how far it can be followed without trespassing. For another reason, too, it is necessary to know all about the adjoining lands. This mine having been closed for several years, its neighbours may have sunk down upon a continuation of the vein, and worked it beyond their own boundaries, far into this very property, completely exhausting it."

Mr. Tresham nodded his satisfaction to Lord Littmass, and said he was delighted to find how well acquainted with the bearings of the case Mr. Maynard was, and that he did not doubt that his introduction to the Board would result in their gladly employing his services. The conversation then turned to the details of the enterprise, the time it would occupy, its cost, and its remuneration.

A suggestion from Lord Littmass that the latter might be safely left to the liberality of the directors, who would decide according to their estimate of the service rendered, was somewhat abruptly negatived by James, who declared that the "no cure, no pay" principle was altogether vicious, and one to which he could by no means assent. Whether he succeeded or not in securing for the Company a valuable property at a cheap rate, his time and brains would equally be expended in their service; and it would be making him a partner in the speculation to allow his remuneration to be dependent upon results. The amount, therefore, should be determined beforehand; with the prospect, possibly, of a bonus in the event of unanticipated difficulty or success.

"Certainly, certainly," said Mr. Tresham, "you are quite correct in your view, and I augur, from the clear perception which you have of your own position, that you will be abundantly perspicacious where our interests are concerned. We learn in the City, my lord, to distrust talents which fail to benefit their owner. When do you think, sir, that you will be able to

start? The season of the year is, I understand, of little consequence on the elevated plateaux of Mexico."

"I do not care for climate," said Maynard, "and have no personal preparations to delay me." And here he paused, for he thought of Margaret, and of the possibility of her going with him; a thought at which his heart beat high. But he at once saw its impossibility, and he felt that he should be only too glad to take her promise with him, and return to claim her in a few months, during which he would confirm her affection and interest by his letters to her. "It will not take long," he thought, "to obtain this, if I am to obtain it at all. And if not, the sooner I am dead, or in Mexico, the better."

"I only want time," he resumed, "to collect the necessary implements and books for a thorough investigation. For though I am pretty well up in minerals and their treatment, I learnt what I know in South America; and there are always sundry latest improvements and discoveries to be hunted up, which may save expense in assaying or working. Two or three weeks ought to be sufficient for this, and will give me time, too, to work up some of my South American notes while still fresh in my memory. When does the next steamer go?"

"One month from the day before yesterday. We shall be quite content if you can start then," said Mr. Tresham. "It is unnecessary to present you

to the whole board of directors. His lordship and I form a sufficient quorum."

After Maynard had taken his leave Mr. Tresham said to Lord Littmass.—

"He seems to be the very man for us; clear, cool, and sharp. Has your lordship known him long?"

"From childhood," said Lord Littmass, drily; "he is straightforward honesty itself, and penetrating as a Spanish Inquisitor where he is interested. The fortunes of a Company could not be in better hands where a bond fide business is concerned."

"And the best of it is," returned Mr. Tresham, "that he has not the interest that a professional miner would have to make out a good case; for he has no expectation of getting an engagement to work it himself, provided he reports well of it. Ah, my dear lord, I trust you may never know as much of the doings of mining gentry as I do. Their sole object is to have money pass through their hands; and in proportion to the amount spent are their It is nothing to them whence it comes, gains. whether out of the mine, or the proprietor's pocket. A tunnel here, a shaft there, a drift somewhere else, on the chance of intercepting a vein that may, or may not, be in the neighbourhood. And, would you believe it, we are safer in undertaking a mining enterprise abroad than we should be at home. had a narrow escape early in my speculating days. I was nearly induced by a clever Welsh lawyer to purchase a coal mine. The prospects were made out to be splendid; a noble vein, and easily worked; a capital plant of machinery on the spot; tramways down to the neighbouring port; a low rent, and moderate royalties: and every chance of the proprietor being returned to represent the county in Parliament. The plan was that I should purchase the works by paying a certain sum down, form a company to repurchase of me and pay the rest, I taking a large number of shares in proof of my confidence in the undertaking, and the vendor retaining a number in proof of his. The previous owner, I was assured, had failed to make a large fortune out of it solely through his bad and wasteful management. I investigated the place, as I believed, thoroughly; and was even taken to see the mine which lies on the same coal-bed a short distance off, and which I knew to be paying well. It is true that I was cautioned by the engineer who accompanied me, against mentioning my intended purchase to anyone there. If known to be in the market, I was told the price would soon rise, and I should have to submit to competition. thought that my precaution of taking my own man with me would be neutralised by his being in the pay of the lawyer. Well, all seemed so satisfactory that I was on the eve of parting with my thousands, when I chanced to overhear a conversation while dining in an eating-house at Bristol, which convinced me that the lawyer was a scoundrel and the property

worthless. Once put on the right track, I had no difficulty in verifying my suspicion. I at once backed out of my agreement. The lawyer was furious, and threatened to compel me at least to pay a large sum in compensation. I dared him to do so, telling him that the only thing for which he had a right to claim payment, was for the lesson he had given me in swindling. Of course he was afraid of going into court and letting all the world know what I had learnt, and the matter was dropped. Some time afterwards I came across a poor fellow who had been less fortunate; and had actually bought that same property of that same lawyer. The completion of the transfer operated like magic to turn his coal into ashes. And this is how it happened. You must know that there exists in mining parlance a term to express what scientific men call a 'solution of continuity.' That is the word 'Fault,' used technically by miners to express any change in a geological stratum by which a vein is broken, or displaced, or altered in quality or direction. Now it happens that across the whole country to which I am referring, there runs one of these faults; and that the veins lying on one side of it are very valuable, while their continuations on the other side are utterly worthless. This fault ran exactly between the mine I have spoken of, and the neighbouring works which I had taken the useless precaution of inspecting, and the mine to be sold was on the wrong side of it. Instead of lying nearly

flat, and being easily accessible, the vein dipped so vertically as to be most costly to work; and instead of yielding an excellent and saleable coal, its produce was of so small a character as to be useless until re-The result was, that the purchaser duced to coke. found himself saddled with a property not merely worthless, but ruinous even to possess; for there was a dead rent of five hundred a-year to be paid, whether anything was got out or not, and some fifty pounds a-month in wages, to keep the mine open and free from water, and no release to be obtained unless by swindling others as he had been swindled himself; for of course the landlord would not give up his claim. The threat to expose the seller unless he took it back was only laughed at, for he knew that it was impossible to prove the worthlessness of a mine to a jury, when plenty of mining engineers could be found who would swear anything they were paid to swear. My friend declined to try and pass his bad bargain off upon some one else; and so he resolved to appeal to the landlord to revoke his lease. This was refused, and it was only when he threatened to declare himself bankrupt, and actually took steps which showed that he was in earnest, that he obtained a compromise, and got quit of his fatal bargain. Such is the hazard of mining in England. The danger in Mexico is not to be compared to it. There, at least, we can obtain a fee simple, and abandon our property if it fail to pay the working."

CHAPTER XV.

AFTER Mr. Tresham had taken his leave, Lord Littmass remained much occupied in meditating upon the strange revolution that had taken place in James Maynard's character. His eagerness and decision in regard to the money part of the business were something entirely opposed to the indifference on such points which had hitherto characterised his whole life; and were explicable to Lord Littmass only on the supposition that his surmise was correct; and that James, hitherto so careless about money, and devoted to science for its own sake, was now bending all his resolution and powers towards gaining an independent position.

The stronger his conviction grew, the more anxious Lord Littmass became to get rid of him, without his again seeing Margaret. It was easy enough to prevent such an interview, but Lord Littmass was wise enough to know that to gain his end he must not appear to be acting any part in the matter. To interpose arbitrarily any obstacle, he was well aware, would only serve as a stimulus to love, and he was not the man to make a blunder of this kind. Even if Margaret

did not care for James as he felt sure that James cared for her, it would be an almost infallible method of exciting her to rebel against such an interference with her disposal of her affections. At least, such would be the case with most girls, and Lord Littmass knew nothing of Margaret to make him suppose that she would act differently from others.

And here it occurred to Lord Littmass that he was in reality a total stranger to his ward; that he had allowed her to grow up in complete ignorance of life and of the ties of human relationship; that he had supplied no possibility of personal affection, no motive for gratitude or obedience. He perceived, in short, that he had placed her in circumstances which forbade the development of any sense of obligation to which he could appeal in support of his authority or his wishes. Occupying the place of a parent, he had been to her a sort of distant overseer, who, connected with her by some invisible link, controlled her fate without any emotion on his side or reference to feeling on hers. He thus began now to think that he had too long adhered to the view he had taken in her childhood, respecting her delicacy of body and simplicity of mind, and that he had committed a serious blunder in dealing with her fortune upon the strength of his belief that an early termination of her life would relieve him from any possible embarrassment on that score. Little dreaming that he would ever be liable to be called to account, he had followed his ambitious and luxurious career, achieving fame and success by his talents and his lavishness, and contracting the debts which had swallowed up the trust committed to him.

His anxieties on this head had been first awakened ' when his sister, Lady Primavera, proposed taking · Margaret with her to Rome. He learnt then that the sickly child had become a fair though slender girl, and though different from others in character, very far removed from the condition of idiotcy to which his imagination had always relegated her. ness and subsequent entrance into a Carmelite convent had renewed his hope of an early release from his responsibility: and it was with no small chagrin that he found himself compelled to consent to her release instead. The first sight of Margaret afterwards renewed his hopes, but only for them to be finally destroyed on his next view of her on his return to London, to which he came back expecting to anticipate James Maynard's return to Eng-His chagrin was then redoubled. Not only was Margaret fast attaining the status of a healthy and beautiful woman, endowed with rare accomplishments, but James had established with her an intimacy and a friendship which threatened to thwart him in all his cherished schemes, and burst the bubble of his pride in its culminating hour. Such a dénouement must be prevented at all hazards, or Lord Littmass, the ornament of literature and delight of the fashionable world, would, instead of receiving honours from his sovereign's hand, as a citizen distinguished alike for his genius and his worth, be exposed as a sham and a counterfeit, who compensated the brilliancy and rectitude of his external and visible life, by the secret rottenness of his interior.

As thus in his vivid creative imagination the possible future grew distinct to his view, and he realised beforehand the supreme agony of his humiliation, and that through the agency of those whom he imagined he had long since consigned to nothingness,—her to the secure grave of an early death—him to the fast grip of collegiate celibacy,—he felt his whole frame collapse as if the circulation were suddenly arrested, and his heart forbidden to fulfil its functions. Gasping with difficulty for breath, he recalled himself sufficiently to be able to fight against the new enemy that had just revealed its presence in his frame. Gradually the strength of his will re-asserted itself, and forced the stricken heart to perform its duty, and propel the warm red life through its customary channels.

"This, then, is to be the end," he mused, as, exhausted with the struggle for life, he lay back in his chair, half-fearing to move. "But it will not be yet, now that I know my danger. For the future I must keep emotion for my fictitious characters, without indulging in it myself. I wonder I never made any of them die of heart-spasm. It would be an easy way of getting rid of a troublesome personage, and I shall

know by my own experience how to describe the symptoms. Ah, I remember now, my doctor once told me to beware of any indications of faintness, and gave me a cordial which he advised me to keep always within reach at night. He must have referred to an attack of this kind. I put the stuff away without thinking more about it. I will try it now."

Getting up to look for it in a drawer at the other end of the room, he was astonished at the feebleness that pervaded his entire system. He managed, however, to totter slowly across, supporting himself by the table, and presently, finding the cordial, placed the vial to his lips. For an instant the stimulant took away his breath, and then, as it drove the blood rapidly through his veins, he felt himself once more the hale, erect man, able to laugh at fate and brave despair itself.

"No, no," he cried aloud. "Lord Littmass is not to be frightened by shadows. He still holds the threads, and the puppets shall dance as he pleases."

CHAPTER XVI.

James Maynard found himself curiously perplexed about a matter, which, had his feelings towards Margaret been of a different character, would have been very simple of solution. How was he to see her again before leaving England? To call and ask for her, taking care, perhaps, to do so when Lord Littmass might be out? Nothing could be more natural, had he not happened to be in love with her. it was, nothing could be more difficult. In the first place, he reflected, he had never since she was a mere child met her in her guardian's house. In the second, a formal visit to her alone could not but expose her to the surmises of the servants. He did not feel sure that a letter would reach her without going through Lord Littmass's hands; and he recoiled from anything resembling an organised attempt at secrecy.

At length, he bethought him of Dame Partridge, as one able and probably willing to help him. He had on the last occasion of his meeting Margaret in the park, spoken of a book that he wished her to read. He would make the dame and the book minister to an interview. So, calling a day or two after the meet-

ing with Mr. Tresham, he asked for Lord Littmass. Lord Littmass, as James pretty strongly suspected, was not at home. Upon this he asked to see Dame Partridge, whereupon he was shown into a small back drawing-room, and presently the dame came to him, wearing her usual half-suppressed look of apprehension.

"Well, nurse," he said, "I am off on my travels again soon, and I am come to say good-bye to you and Miss Margaret. I should like to see her if she is at home. I want to give her a task to do while I am away, which will strengthen her mind, and improve her German."

"And where, and for how long may you be going this time, sir?" asked the dame, in her laconic way.

"Only to Mexico. I shall be back in five or six months."

. "And does his lordship send——I mean approve of your going to that wild, unhealthy country?"

"Certainly; it is partly in his interests that I am going. As to its being wild, you have no idea how much more agreeable a wild country is to me than a tame one, and it is not unhealthy in the parts I shall be most in."

"Ah, sir, I was thinking of the people and the danger. I sometimes think you will be going away once too often."

"Well, it is of little consequence to anyone. One comfort of having neither parents nor friends, is the

liberty it gives one to go and get killed wherever one chooses. If I were a married man now——," and here he broke off abruptly, and then, with a desperate effort, added,—

- "Tell me, do you think I have any chance with Miss Margaret,—I mean, if I could get into an independent position, and could afford to marry, do you think she would care for me?"
 - "Does his lordship know of this, sir?"
- "Not in the least. I wouldn't tell him on any account, until I am sure of herself, and have enough to live upon."

The dame appeared relieved at hearing this, and said,—

- "Pray, sir, keep to that decision. And, if I may be so bold, I would advise you to say nothing to Miss Margaret about it, at least until you come back. She is but a child in mind, and would not half understand you. She would, besides, in her innocence be very likely to betray it to Lord Littmass."
- "You think, then, that he would disapprove so very strongly?"
- "It is impossible for me to say what his opinion might be, but if he were to disapprove, you would only be making yourself and her unhappy for nothing. His lordship always has his own way, sir."
- "Nurse, did you never discover, when I was a boy, that I managed to get my way, too, sometimes? Well, there is but one thing in the world that shall

be an obstacle to my marrying Miss Waring, and that is herself. My love for her is such that if she will have me, all the guardians and Lord Littmasses in the world shall not come between to keep us apart. Go now and send her to me."

"You don't mean, sir, to-"

"I mean to say good-bye. Go, there's a dear good nurse. You were always my friend as a boy, and you shall be so now."

Abandoning further opposition, the dame went for Margaret, saying to herself,—

"He has all his lordship's imperiousness, when roused. If ever they do come to disagree, it will be terrible work between them."

"I have brought you the German tale to make a careful translation of for me," said James, as Margaret placed her thin, white hand in his. "It will be rather a long task, but it will well repay you by its beauty. It is called 'Aslauga's Knight,' and is by La Motte Fouqué. I shall be glad to have your interpretation of its meaning, too, for, like Undine, and Cupid and Psyche, it is a bit of an enigma. Six months have to pass before we can meet again, for I am leaving Europe for about that time. If you will write to me about it, or about yourself, I shall be glad indeed. I shall be grieved if our lives are to be altogether severed by my absence. Your goodwill and—and affection are very dear to me, Margaret. You little imagine how dear a woman can become to a

man. I should like to teach you this, if I could do it without distressing you," he continued, noting the placid yet kindly look with which she gazed upon him, and seeking in vain for any responsive tremor in the hand which he still held. "I would not cause you a moment's pain in the world, but I must tell you that you have grown into my life, and become so much and so large a part of it, that it would make havoc and wreck of it were I forced to separate you from it."

He paused for a moment, as if expecting her to speak, but seeing her silent and deeply attentive, he again continued,—

"It is often a woman's boast that she grants tocompassion what love does not prompt; and it is as often her reward that love and happiness spring from obeying her kindly nature. Acting in blindness and in faith she at length opens her eyes in a new world, a world of light and confidence and joy; -- unless, indeed, she give herself to a villain. I know, Margaret, that your hesitation does not arise from any distrust of me. It is rather the strangeness of the idea, and mistrust or ignorance of your own nature. I will not ask you to give me any definite answer now, beyond promising me this, that you will try to think of me as I think of you, and that you will do your best to grow into the woman worthy to be the wife of an honest and earnest man. Think, dear Margaret, what joy you will give me when you write and tell me that I may come back to claim you, and wear you as

the crown of my life, my prompter and helper to all good ends. What say you?"

"You know, James," she replied, gazing calmly and steadfastly upon him, "that you have from me the gratitude, respect and affection which I owe to you as my one friend who has ever taken any interest in me and taught me anything. What more I have to give that you can care for, I know not. It would be making a poor return to give you the trouble of taking care of me altogether, when Lord Littmass gives me up," she added, with a gentle smile; "and so burden you with a useless incumbrance when you have to fight your own way in the world."

"Then you do not absolutely forbid me to hope? You will let me write to you, and you will write to me—" he exclaimed, with joyous eagerness. "Oh, darling girl, you know not how great a weight you lift from my heart, how black a cloud from my life. Now can I go forth among my fellow men, and work and win my way to the fortune that is to free me from my bonds. Do you know that I have accepted a mission to Mexico solely because it gives me promise of the independence that I covet for your sake? Should I succeed, as I now feel that I must, I shall free your guardian from farther trouble on your account, and you from farther obligation to one who evidently cares not for you."

"Do you know," said Margaret, "that it has never occurred to me to inquire on what terms Lord Litt-

mass takes care of me, or in what relation I stand towards him. I do not know whether I am an expense to him, or, indeed, who I really am. What a thoughtless child I have always been! Since you spoke to me just now, a thick veil seems to have fallen from my sight. I am years older. Ah, what will my guardian say?"

As she uttered the question her faithful nurse entered the room, thinking, probably, that the leave-taking had lasted long enough, and hearing Margaret's words, said,—

"He will say nothing, my dear young lady, because he must know nothing. Whatever Mr. James has said to you, you must keep safe in your own breast, even from me; or there may be sad trouble in store for us all. Now, sir, you must go,—indeed."

"I shall see you again before I leave England, if possible," he said to Margaret. "In the meantime, I shall live and work in hope."

He took his departure, and Margaret followed her nurse back to their sitting-room in silence. Arrived there, she began turning over the pages of the German book Maynard had given her, the dame furtively watching her the while. Presently she looked up and said,—

[&]quot;Nurse, is life a riddle to everybody?"

[&]quot;Dear me, miss, why?"

[&]quot;Tell me, is it?"

[&]quot;Yes, dear child, it is, until-until-"

- "Until when? they die?"
- "No, until they learn to love."

Margaret resumed her book. After a few more silent moments she said,—

- "I suppose I am very stupid."
- "Dear heart, and why?"
- "I don't seem to understand anything?"
- "You are very young yet, miss."
- "Oh," she said, musingly. "At what age do people learn to love, and understand riddles?"
- "Ah, dear child, it takes people at all ages, but some keep it off for a long time."
- "I do not think I am getting any nearer to that age. What do people do when they cannot learn the lesson?"
- "What I hope some day to see you do; that is, to entrust yourself to the care of a good husband, who will teach you."
- "Mr. Maynard wants me to marry him some day, when he has enough money to live without his fellowship. I am very fond of him and wish to see him happy, and making a great name in the world; but, do you know, nurse dear, that I cannot imagine myself doing as he wishes, or, indeed, ever marrying anybody. I suppose other people are not like me. Are they?"
- "It would be well if many were like you, and could wait patiently to learn life's lessons without being so eager to anticipate them. It's a happy thing,

miss, never to expect too much, and to be able to be content to do one's duty when the time comes."

"Oh, if I had any duty, how I should enjoy doing it. Do you know that it seems to me that the more I disliked it, the more I should wish to do it, if I was only sure it was my duty. What do you think of my asking my guardian to set me some duty to do?"

It was a new idea to the dame that Margaret should venture to speak to Lord Littmass of her own accord. She had carefully avoided inculcating any fear of him, but at the same time had also carefully avoided encouraging any familiarity with him. So she said,—

- "I think his lordship would be best pleased by your quietly pursuing your occupations, and improving yourself, and waiting patiently until some change occurs that requires his interference."
- "Do you think it would be any relief to him if I were to be married?"
- "Anyone who wants to marry you, must go to his lordship first, and obtain his consent."
 - "Do you think Mr. Maynard has done so?"
 - "I can't say, indeed. Probably not."
- "And what would my guardian say to him if he did?"
- "Gentlefolks can't marry without money, and as Mr. James would have no money but what he could earn, he could hardly go to his lordship and ask to be allowed to live on yours,—that is, if you have any?"
 - "Do you think I have?" asked Margaret, eagerly.

"It is impossible for me to say. Why do you want to know?"

"I should so like to give it to Mr. Maynard. He would make so much better a use of it than I shall ever be able to."

"Young ladies don't generally give their money away to gentlemen without giving themselves with it. Not that I mean to say there is any reason for you to suppose that you have any, independently of his lord-ship."

"I wish I knew something about myself; what I have, who I am, and what I was made for."

"All in good time. Such knowledge comes too soon for most of us who have to be our own providences. You may rest content in having a providence in your guardian, and a friend in Mr. James, if anything happens to his lordship."

"And in you too, nurse, dear; I don't know what I should ever do without you. There, I have three friends, I, who thought myself so lonely."

CHAPTER XVII.

LORD LITTMASS on his return was informed by the servant that Mr. Maynard had called and asked for him, and had said that he would call again before leaving town.

- "Nothing more?"
- "Only that finding your lordship was not within, he asked for Mrs. Partridge."
 - "Did he see her?"
 - "Yes, my lord."
 - "Tell Mrs. Partridge I wish to speak with her."

Lord Littmass received his old retainer graciously, inquired what she thought of Miss Waring's health, and expressed satisfaction at her good report, said that his physician recommended sea air for her, and ended by announcing that he had discovered a charming seaside cottage to which she was to go in two or three days attended by the dame.

- "Has your lordship any further directions?"
- "I wished also to inquire if your late husband's brother has shown any signs of relenting and doing justice by you."
 - "He is dead, my lord, having left all his, or rather

all my, property to a young wife whom he married a short time back. So that is gone for ever."

"Very sad, and very hard. I am truly sorry for you. I must try and keep you with me still."

"I am very grateful for all your lordship's kindness. I really do not know what I should do else."

"Well, good afternoon; and I hope you will like your new residence."

"Good-day, my lord;" and, much relieved, the dame turned to go.

"Oh, by the way," said Lord Littmass, in a tone of indifference as she was leaving the room, "did Mr. Maynard give you any message for me?"

"No, my lord, he said he should call again before leaving London."

"Ah, he is going away on another expedition. Now you and he have always been great friends. Tell me, do you think he will ever settle down quietly?"

"Never, till he takes a wife, my lord," said the dame, hardily. "That would break him of his wild habits. But I am told that gentlemen who have college fellowships are not allowed to marry."

"Very true, my good dame, and therefore it would be a kindness to warn all young ladies to be on their guard against him. Indeed, I consider that all men who are similarly incapacitated ought not to go at large unless ticketed 'ineligible.'"

It was a rare event for Lord Littmass to gossip thus

with the dame, and she was wondering what it betokened, when he asked,—

"And does Miss Margaret exhibit any symptoms of restlessness? She is growing into a woman now. Is she impatient to go into society? Does she manifest any preferences? Has she a liking for—for Mr. Maynard, for instance?"

"Bless you, sir!" cried the old woman, now seeing his drift, and assuming a tone of simplicity as the best defence against his subtle penetration; "bless your lordship's heart, my young lady is but a child still for all her years; and as for society or marriage, she does not know the meaning of such words. Mr. James was always good-natured to her, as he is to everybody, bless him, from childhood, lending her books and the like; and to-day, when he bid her good-bye, he gave her a long German lesson to do against his return. Of course she is grateful for any notice, seeing so few people as she does."

"And he, you believe, thinks no more of her than that, or indeed of any other woman?"

"I can only judge by what I see and know of the characters of both of them; and I can't fancy Mr. James ever giving up his liberty and settling down with a wife. But perhaps your lordship would be glad if they would think of each other in that way?" added the dame, with a sudden thought of surprising him into a revelation of his plans, and diverting his attention from her to himself.

On his part Lord Littmass considered that he would best secure her good offices by abstaining from pressing her, and appearing to take her into his confidence. So he said seriously, but gently and firmly,—

"You will do a real service to both of these young people, and to your old master too, dame, by discouraging any tendency whatever to matrimony on either side. Mr. Maynard cannot possibly wed a delicate portionless girl; indeed I doubt if he can ever wed at all. Miss Waring is entirely dependent upon me, and I have almost more to do with my money than I can accomplish, without giving her a fortune. I could not allow her to go from my house a penniless bride. Were she to marry, therefore, I should have to reduce my establishment, and retain only my necessary personal attendants. Of course this confidence does not go beyond yourself, but you can act accordingly. Now go and prepare your young lady for her trip to the seaside, and tell her that I shall be glad to see her in the evening."

The dame was shrewd enough to interpret this last speech as a threat of dismissal in the event of her master being thwarted in his wishes. All that she said to Margaret was to advise her to be perfectly frank and unembarrassed with her guardian, and avoid betraying James's secret, if possible, since there was no knowing how the knowledge of it might affect him with his lordship. By thus putting her on the defensive for Maynard's sake, the good dame knew that

she was taking the most effectual means to suppress any timidity that Margaret might have felt on her own account, and to put her on her mettle to ward off any injurious suspicion from her friend.

Lord Littmass received his ward in the evening with a marked kindness that set her entirely at her ease. He complimented her on her improving looks, spoke of the great hope he had that sea air and bathing would quite set her up, and how, after her health was restored and her education finished, he should begin to think of placing her in the world; -until Margaret thought that he must be the most careful and amiable of guardians. Then he went on to lift up a corner of the curtain of life, and give her a glimpse of the world and its ways. And Margaret listened half amused, half frightened, at the revelation of the drama in action around her, and thought that either her guardian must be the most cynical of men, or the world the most undesirable of places. A bystander would have perceived that Lord Littmass was artfully exhibiting a twofold picture to the girl's simple mind in order that, whatever her real character was, she might equally be influenced in the direction he desired. He told her of the supremacy of wealth and its triumph over all other considerations as the leading motive that swayed men and women alike. He enlarged upon the pleasures it conferred in ministering to ambition, love, science, art, and charity, drawing a vivid picture first of the delight of being able with open handed generosity to minister

to the needs of the less fortunate; and then of the sordid miseries of the poverty that blackens life, and closes perforce the intellect to all sense of beauty and truth, and the heart to all emotions of sympathy and benevolence.

Seeing Margaret listening, absorbed, to eloquence, he went on to describe the struggles of men to ward off this dreadful fiend of poverty, and to achieve the blissful certainty of competence; and he told her how sad it was to see, as he had many and many a time seen, a man of genius on the point of success in his chosen career suddenly dragged down from his high hopes by a foolish yielding to the light impulses of love for some useless and portionless woman; and how much nobler it would have been for such man and such woman to deny themselves, and consult the dictates of prudence. And as Margaret listened, her thoughts naturally turned to the one man in whom she was interested, who sought her love, and of whose genius she had no doubt; and it occurred to her that she might play this noble part, and refuse him for his own sake that which he sought from her, and so leave him to follow his career unburdened and unfettered.

This was her first thought, conceived under the impression that she was one of those same useless and portionless maidens whom Lord Littmass described as forming so dangerous a class. This was the end toward which her guardian was artfully

leading her, for he could not look on her face without believing in the innate nobility of her disposition. But the first impression soon gave way to this other: "Am I a portionless girl? and, if not, can I not help James, instead of hindering him?"

In revolving her idea, she lost something of the glowing discourse that was being pronounced for her edification. Her nurse's dictum against the propriety of giving her money without herself rose before her, and she rebelled against it. At length she determined to clear up her difficulty by appealing to Lord Littmass.

There was as yet no break in his discourse of which she could avail herself. She, therefore, resumed her listening. It seemed to her as if he read her thoughts, and was resolved to leave her no resource; for he went on to say,

"It is in the hopeful struggle with poverty that genius finds its best education, where the work brings its own legitimate reward as it progresses. The sudden accession to unearned wealth is apt to be almost as fatal to genius as the depressing effects of continued poverty. Yet the alliance between the ideal and the real, between genius and business, is of a nature so delicate and evanescent that, as in the charming allegory of Cupid and Psyche, repulsion and separation follow hard upon the introduction of too strong a light upon their union. Their most intimate relations must be held under a veil of obscurity; the artist never allow-

ing his mind to be so withdrawn from the contemplation of his work as to behold in all its palpable reality the grosser reward of success. No: God and Mammon, the standard and the payment, will not be served at once. Tell me," he added, quitting his abstract vein and addressing her personally; "you have acquired considerable skill in painting. Can you imagine yourself working as well if you were thinking all the time of the money you were to get for your picture, as if you were labouring earnestly, and with a single eye to the truth or beauty of your idea, and the faithfulness of your representation?"

"Oh, no, indeed," cried Margaret; "and yet, I think that if I were compelled to paint in order to earn money for those I loved, the thought of their need would make me work much harder and better than if I were a mere dilettante."

"Harder, possibly; but not better, in the highest sense. In such case quality would have to defer to quantity. But I was speaking of the efforts of genius to manifest itself to mankind, and enrich the world with the fruits of its inspiration. An artist looking only to his pay will, perforce, consult the taste and culture of his audience, and lower his representation to be in accordance with their condition of mind, rather than maintain his own standard of excellence."

"Oh, yes, I see now your meaning," cried Margaret, carried away by the eagerness of her comprehension, and forgetting altogether the augustness of her

monitor's presence. "It is the way in which things appear to him that the artist is expected to portray, not merely that in which they appear to the commonplace view. To do any good work one must be free from any bias that may distort the vision. This must be one reason why, as you say, we cannot serve God and Mammon. And the other, that the possession of wealth is likely to overlay the soul, and dull its apprehension of beauty or truth."

- "I am glad to find that you comprehend me so perfectly."
 - "Pray, Lord Littmass, have I any wealth?"
 - "You! Why?"
- "Because, if I have, I should so like to give it, or some of it, to Mr. Maynard, to enable him to pursue his single path to usefulness and fame, without his being obliged to think about the mean end of money."

And having at last hazarded her shot, the fair girl sat trembling and frightened, doubting whether she had committed some enormity in her guardian's eyes.

- "You have a great regard for that gentleman?" he inquired, looking penetratingly at her.
- "He has always been my good and kind friend," she answered, plucking up her courage anew on finding no storm descending upon her; "and he deserves all the gratitude that I can show him. Besides——"
 - "Besides what? Do not fear to tell me."
- "I think and hope that if he felt himself at ease about money, he would not be going away to wild

countries to earn it, but would follow his studies at home, and be content to regard me as his child-friend, as he has always done."

- "Perhaps he thinks you are outgrowing such a position, and he would promote you to something more. What do you think about it?"
- "I honour and respect him very much, but would rather remain always as I am, if I could be of service to him without changing. But I am so ignorant of everything. I do not even know whether I have anything of my own, or am dependent on your bounty for the means of living."
- "So that if you had money you would give it to him, and remain your own mistress?"
 - "Oh, yes, that I would, indeed."
- "My child, you have nothing but what I may be able to give you some day. He has enough to enable any reasonable man to follow his bent. You need not fear on his account. Neither need you fear for yourself. No one shall carry you off against your will."

Thus spake Lord Littmass, perceiving that his wisdom had overreached itself, being defective in respect of its omission to take into account that sweet perversity of the womanly heart which makes pity the shortest cut to the affections, and self-sacrifice for a friend a positive delight. Wishing to excite her to covet wealth for herself, and despise Maynard for his poverty, he had led her to covet wealth for

him and despise it for herself, even to sacrificing her own prospects to that end. Desirous now to withdraw her from dwelling upon any disappointment she might feel at finding her fair scheme blighted, Lord Littmass hastened to bring her attention back to herself, and so asked,—

"Do you detect any new ambitions or desires springing up in yourself since you came home and health began to glow in your veins, that may indicate the turn you may wish your life to take in the future?"

"My future life!" asked Margaret, with a start. "I have never had a thought beyond the present. I suppose I am very odd and foolish. Indeed the nuns in France used to tell me so; but I have never been conscious of any other wish than to serve God by making all the beauty possible to me by means of Art, and Music, and Worship, believing that I had but a short time to live, and that I should thus best fulfil my duty. But the little I have seen since I have come home to England has convinced me that there is more ugliness of life to be banished than can be got at by any art I have known, or any prayers I have prayed. If you would only tell me some duty I may set about at once, I shall be so grateful. Being good serves none, or at most, one. Show me any way of doing good, and I shall wish to live and to toil."

For one reason, at least, the natural animation and freedom with which she spoke, gratified her guardian

exceedingly, for it proved to him that he had played his part to perfection in the winning of her confidence. And as the consciousness of the wide interval between their respective moral natures rose vividly before him, exhibiting him to himself very much in the light of a wily demon confessing a simple and unsuspecting angel, he smiled complacently upon his achievement, and warmed towards the unconscious instrument of his gratification.

"Were you strong, and robust, and some years older," he said, "many courses would be open to you that might lead you in the path which your enthusiasm inclines you to tread. But my first care is for your health and education. My second for your fitting establishment in life. After a few months by the sea you will return hither, I hope, a new creature in body. In the meantime, it is my wish that you should pursue the means of culture you have hitherto followed, and perfect yourself as well as may be in music, painting, and languages. If masters are procurable where you will be staying, you shall have Every faculty cultivated becomes part of our life's outfit, and is often available for our service when least anticipated. You may retire now, trusting all to me. In a very few days you will be accompanied by Mrs. Partridge to the coast."

CHAPTER XVIII.

JAMES MAYNARD breakfasted next morning with Lord Littmass by express invitation. Margaret was not present, and the conversation turned towards the Mexican scheme. He had dined the previous evening with Mr. Tresham, and everything was in fair train for carrying out the enterprise. Lord Littmass obtained from him the main particulars of the evening's conversation, and then drew him out on the subject of his recent visit to South America. was contemplating laying a portion of the scene of his new novel in that region, and he knew well how to avail himself of the information gathered by the observing minds of others; to elaborate from it a picture of life, manners, and scenery, so vivid and truthful as to make even those who had been in the country itself, take it for granted that the author must have long lived there. In descriptive and narrative conversation James excelled. He had seen. studied, and learnt so much at home, that he knew how and what to observe when abroad. Lord Littmass even complimented him on the possession of this faculty; and James said in acknowledgment

that travel was useful only to those who had studied, for that to the ignorant and careless all countries are alike.

"Young men," he said, "are constantly being sent abroad to enlarge their minds, without knowing enough of their own country to enable them to discern the significance either of likeness or of difference. I once came across a young English nobleman who did nothing but abuse the people and the country for being different from what he had been accustomed to at home. Being among Spaniards his criticisms were endured with civility; but had he behaved in the same manner among Americans, especially in the West, he would soon have had a knife or a bullet put into him. Hood describes such an individual, as truly as he does most things, when he says,—

" Alas,

Some minds improve by travel, others rather Resemble, copper wire, or brass, That gets the narrower by going farther.'"

"Speaking of minds improving," said Lord Littmass, after a short pause, "I wish I could think that my ward, Miss Waring, had been benefited by her residence abroad. Fragile as she ever was, both in mind and body, she has come back more of a skeleton than of a woman, and a complete child in intellect. A thousand pities for a girl with her prepossessing face and fine prospects."

He said this as if the matter really weighed upon

his own mind, but could not have the smallest interest for his hearer.

"Miss Waring of weak mind and fine prospects!"
ejaculated Maynard, before he could stop himself, so unawares was he taken by his wily host. "Surely the epithets might change places with each other."

"Ah, you have seen her recently. Do you think she has improved under English air? I almost fear that such colour as she sometimes has is rather hectic than healthy. At one time I rather looked forward to her making a sensation when I should introduce her into society. Her face, voice, and expectations would have enabled her to make a grand match. But some fatal delicacy seems to have smitten her, and made her unfit for the world, even if her life is preserved. Of course what I allude to has not escaped your observation?"

"I have seen nothing of the kind," answered James. "Her mind, though unequally developed, owing to the irregularity of her education, and the lack of youthful companionship, is as sound and healthy as that of any person breathing, and I believe and trust that her constitution is the same."

"You quite raise my hopes," said Lord Littmass, in a somewhat frigid tone that ill accorded with his words. "And if it be really as you think, I may yet anticipate a bright future for her. When are you leaving town?"

"At once, but I intend to return before finally starting for Mexico," answered James, his heart sink-

ing, and all the glow: gone from his cherished picture of the future.

"Margaret an heiress!" repeated Maynard to himself as he proceeded on his way. "This is indeed a blow to my hopes. Her wealth makes an infinitely greater gap between us than my poverty. How this haughty lord would scoff at my presumption, if he knew what had passed! A strange circumstance, too, that the first and only time he has ever referred to her in my presence, it should be to inflict this crushing blow. Is it mere coincidence? Was it a chance remark? He knows that we have met of late: that I am a man, and she almost a woman, and a lovely one too; and that men and women when young are very apt to become attached to each other. Perhaps he only intended to put me on my guard; to intimate in the most delicate manner that any addresses from me will be vain. Or, can he have any idea of the fact, and without betraying his information, be seeking to outmanœuvre me? Can the dame or Margaret herself have given any hint? I will write . from Oxford, and ask the old woman; and also what Margaret's prospects really are."

This is what he wrote from Oxford.

"Please keep this to yourself, and send me at once a few lines in answer. Lord Littmass intimated to me that Miss Margaret is a great heiress, and con-

[&]quot;MY DEAR OLD NURSE,

sequently far beyond my reach. Can you tell me the facts, that I may not make a fool of myself in the dark.

"Also, can Lord L. have any idea of my attachment?

"Yours affectionately,

Several days passed, and James Maynard received no answer. This delay caused him much anxiety. Could his note by any chance have got into Lord Littmass's hands? Of course letters for the servants generally went straight to them; but, he remembered now, something had been said about a visit to the coast, and a letter to the dame might be referred to the master for redirection. If so, the Oxford postmark and the handwriting would excite his curiosity, and he might detain or destroy the letter, or make the dame tell him its contents.

At length the delay was explained by the answer, which was as follows:—

"Cove Cottage, Porlock, North Devon.

"DEAR SIR,

"Your letter has just reached me. His lordship is very penetrating, but he cannot know anything of what you ask. My young lady's prospects depend entirely upon him. He is not rich, as people suppose. If there is any condescension it will be on your part. Pray destroy this note. This is a very retired place, close by the sea. My young lady is delighted with it, and bathes daily. She has already begun the German task which you gave her.

"Yours respectfully, and obediently,
"Jane Partridge."

The reconciliation of the two statements respecting Margaret's "prospects" was a problem that James confessed himself unable to solve. Combining all the statements made on the subject, it would appear that she had nothing of her own, that Lord Littmass intended her to be his heiress, and that he had little to bestow upon her; a combination which by no means bore out the "fine prospects," of which her guardian had spoken to James.

Again, what could be the old woman's meaning by "the condescension being on his part?" Who could he be, and who Margaret? These were questions to which he had never cared to find answers. Now, a solution readily presented itself. Margaret must be an illegitimate daughter of Lord Littmass, and he was her superior in virtue of such birth. The dame, he well knew, was the last person to speak at random, or to make a positive assertion without ample justification. The curt and sententious style of her note showed him that it cost her a considerable effort to prevail upon herself to tell him so much, and that it was not without a considerable misgiving lest her regard for him was leading her to exceed her duty.

Amid all his perplexity one course alone stood out before him as meeting most of the practical and the sentimental emergencies. This was, to appeal point blank to Lord Littmass, who, as the guardian of them both, was entitled to this consideration, and to ask for his sanction to their engagement. Yet, what was the use? His answer could only be of one kind. Had he not, indeed, already given an answer in anticipation?

"Ah!" cried James, wincing, as the thought struck him like a sudden shot. "I see it all. He has purposely put it out of my power as an honourable man, to make any advances towards Margaret, by telling me that she is rich, while I am a pauper. No good, then, asking his permission until I have gained my independence. He would make me contemptible in her eyes by representing me as seeking her for her wealth, and withdrawing her from the position which she has a right to claim. And if she, indeed, stand in the relation to him which seems most probable, he will doubly resent, as an instance of ingratitude, the thwarting of his plans by me. Margaret is in There is no one to make her forget me. seclusion. I will not seek her again before I leave England, but write a few lines of farewell and hope. And then to work! Who knows but that this expedition may lead to fortune? The Spaniards did not rob Mexico of all its gold and silver. I may do a good thing for myself as well as for the Company. But in enriching Lord Littmass I shall but widen the gulf that separates me from Margaret! No matter. Perhaps he will be duly grateful, and she at least will know that I sought her, believing her to be poorer than myself, and that I sought wealth only for her sake; and, when rich, I will present myself to Lord Littmass and demand her. To work! then, to work! and this time to work that will pay, pay in coin, not in honour merely, or barren self-culture."

CHAPTER XIX.

In his newly-born enthusiasm of money-making, James Maynard commenced his preparations for his These consisted in perfecting his acenterprise. quaintance with the technical Spanish legal and mining phraseology; in learning the newest methods of assaying and testing ores; and all the details of draining, extracting, crushing, and refining. He was a man who did nothing by halves. He would entrust nothing to other hands, but would qualify himself to do everything that his mission involved beyond mere brute labour. Finding that he had ample time for these varied tasks, inasmuch as a great deal of what he had to learn was to be obtained from books, and could be done on the voyage, he determined to complete his South American notes and offer them to some publisher. This, he considered, would be recreation in the midst of his other labours, for he was still at that age when a man fancies that he finds rest by changing his occupation from one kind of mental work to another; not having yet discovered that the brain will not long consent to be thus cheated of its due supply of repose and fresh blood. Sixteen hours a day of close application for several weeks together had only once as yet begun to tell upon his highly nervous frame. He had got over the effects of that excess on his last voyage to Brazil, and he feared not now to devote the remainder of his time in England to labour equally severe, save that it involved a good deal of open-air work and exercise.

Ever a student of the abstrusest problems of antiquity, he had been excited by some remains which he had come upon in one of his rides across the Pampas of the Cordilleras, to institute a comparison between them and the monuments of Salisbury Plain. had made valuable notes respecting the sun-worship of the Incas, as exhibited in the temples they had erected, and which survived the ravages of their Spanish conquerors. He had discovered ample indications of the use of the cross among races severed from time immemorial, perhaps for ever, from intercourse with the rest of mankind,—where rode in the nightly sky above them the starry effigy of the symbol revered throughout Christendom. He had reason to believe that he would find a counterpart of these things in the remains of the Druids, and derive therefrom an argument bearing on the original identity of races or of worships. So he determined to take his books and instruments, and sojourn awhile at Salisbury, where he could follow his antiquarian researches in the intervals of his other labours.

His work might lead to substantial profit, and, besides, was not Margaret in Devonshire, and would he not, at Salisbury, be half-way on the road towards her?

CHAPTER XX.

JAMES MAYNARD was one in whom, throughout his youth, the supremacy of the intellect had ever been undisturbed by any intrusion of the affections. Love attacks most men early, and recurs with gradually increasing intensity, until some special assault succeeds in establishing its sway and dominating the remainder of their lives. He had grown up ignorant even of the ordinary ties of domestic affection, and had passed through his school and college days without contracting any friendships of sufficient strength to influence his career. For Woman he had a kind of general admiration, and held that men sought her society because the difference of their natures enabled her to give her sympathy unmingled with any sentiment of rivalry; whereas men could scarcely help feeling a degree of envy of each other's achievements. But as for falling in love, he thought that if ever he should do that it would be with a steam-engine, a description of being for which he entertained the highest admiration, regarding it as the most beautiful and charming creature in the world, inasmuch as it combined the greatest amount of power with the highest degree of

docility. For, as he used to discourse to the knot of college friends, who delighted to gather in his curiously decorated rooms, and listen to his descriptions of his wanderings:—

"It is all very well to say that men and women are what they are made by each other. This kind of action and reaction has been going on ever since the world began, and mankind has made but little progress under it. But see what the action and reaction of man and the steam-engine is doing for us! I don't mean as to manufactures and the conveniences of life merely. It is as the locomotive that steam is the greatest revolutioniser. The world of the future, the new heaven and new earth, dates from a twofold parent, not man and woman, but man and steam. The ideas engendered of these are the faith and science of the future. So nourished and so reared, human sympathies will grow with human knowledge, the human heart with the human head, until all exclusive sympathy of cloister or hearth alike vanish in a universal many-sidedness; and the whole past be melted and fused together, and recast in a fresh mould for the future service of mankind! But the period before the first day will, as of old, seem but a chaos to those who come after. Perhaps to many of the dwellers therein who fail to discern the signs of their times."

Now, when love did at length overtake Maynard, it took complete possession of him, and diffused itself

throughout his whole being, compelling him, after the agonies of his first struggle, to regard everything from a new point of view. It affected his science, his faith, and his practice, and forced him to bend his whole powers eagerly towards attaining its fulfilment. No misgiving as to mutuality of fitness troubled him for a moment; for his love was a furnace in which all angularities would be dissolved, all differences combined. It was a triumph to him to find himself able to bend his intellect once more to his work, and to be aided therein by the newly-born hope of a happy issue. A vast improvement this, he now deemed it, on the desultory, abstract, impersonal aims of his previous existence.

Arrived at the scene of his labours he hired a small lodging, and set himself to work at his various tasks. The mornings, from a very early hour, were devoted to the matters connected with his coming expedition. The afternoons and evenings to measurements and calculations, topographical and astronomical, at Stonehenge. The brisk seven miles' walk to and from Salisbury, the return home being often deferred until night and the stars were over all, did something towards resting and renovating the scholar's brain; and James thoroughly enjoyed the time thus spent. For now he had a supreme object and hope to animate and preoccupy him,—a future with Margaret, nourished by the affection and sympathy of her pure and lofty soul; and tending, in his turn, the growth of her

clear, eager intelligence:—these made an ideal of happiness which had come to form part of his very self, until he felt that to have to give her up would be to extinguish all the light of his life. It was true that he did not know for certain that she loved him: or that, even if she did, she could ever marry him. The origin and future destiny of both were equally hidden in obscurity; but he vowed a vow that none should come between and tear her from him.

It was one evening, at the termination of his sojourn, that exultation at the completion of his work, stimulated perhaps by the heat of the sun, in which he had been toiling for several hours, brought . on a condition of alternate exaltation and depression. In order to take a final survey of the magic circle of huge stones which compose the remains, he had, by means of a rope fastened at one end and thrown over the top, managed to mount to the summit of the tallest trilithon, that which, standing hard by the altar-stone, has doubtless witnessed many a solemn and terrible sacrifice to the ruthless gods of old. Here he sat meditating, until the after-glow of a glorious sunset arrested his gaze. He watched the slow changes of the sky until they ceased in grey. The dews of evening fell on his uncovered head: and the stars came thickly out as twilight gave place to Absorbed in reveries in which the remotest darkness. part of man's history mingled with visions of his own future, he was unconscious both of the approach of the

carriage that had stopped beyond the outer ring of stones, and of the advancing steps of its late inmate. He was unconscious of all without, until the bright gleaming of a meteor that darted across the sky and vanished in darkness, recalled him to himself; recalled him to the possibility of the fall of his own happiness being prefigured by the fall of von star from its place of brightness. And in the intensity of his realisation of the blackness of darkness that awaited him in such case, he suddenly stood erect on his perilous elevation, and there, hand clenched and face upturned towards the glistening sky, swore to God that not even He nor Death should tear her from him: --when he perceived in the starlit gloom beneath him, at a short distance from the base of his pedestal, a form that was strange indeed seen there and at such a time, but yet a form that was familiar to him.

The sight of Lord Littmass recalled him to himself and to the practical world. Now was the time for striking the heated iron. Now would his excited energies mould all opposition according to his wishes. His secret, declared as it had just been to heaven, he would not shrink from telling also to man, even to the man whose hands held the clues of his fate and of hers who alone was dear to him. It might theoretically, and to cold calculation, be folly and madness thus to precipitate events, and to exhibit, as it were, his hand prematurely to his antagonist; but the highest wisdom lay sometimes in yielding to the

moment's burning inspiration, and in disregarding the dictates of mere prudence. The man and the purpose had been present before, here now were the opportunity and the mood.

Thus thought James while silence still prevailed, and no utterance of Lord Littmass had shown that he recognised him, or broken the spell that was on him.

"One moment, my lord, and I will be with you," said Maynard, preparing to descend by his rope.

Lord Littmass waited in silence until he approached, and then said, in a cheerful tone,—

"I am just in time, I find, to give you a lift back to Salisbury. I called at your lodgings on my way back from Devonshire, and heard that you were likely to be here. I had often wished to visit the Druids' famous haunt, and so have come out to meet you. I would not bring the carriage into the charmed circle."

The sound of his guardian's voice dispelled Maynard's dream. The very coolness of his tones communicated itself to his fervid feelings, and rapidly reduced his glowing mood to its normal temperature. He perceived that it was necessary for both sides to be under the influence of the excitement that had just dominated him, in order to produce that condition of rapport in which alone mutual sympathy and comprehension are possible. He had thought, at the first glimpse of Lord Littmass, that his adjuration

must have been overheard and its import apprehended, and that, therefore, the ground was prepared for his appeal. The unconcern manifested in the voice and address of his visitant put this idea to flight; and Maynard presently rejoiced thereat; rejoiced that he had not betrayed himself before the time which he had deliberately fixed upon. He little dreamed that his astute guardian had heard every word, and perfectly understood the purport thereof, and was now about carefully to lead the conversation into a channel where he could, without apparent design, attempt to withdraw him from his infatuation, and deal a death-blow to his hopes.

"This must be the best of all times for a visit here, when the vastness of the stones is enhanced by the twilight that lingers on their summits, and their bases are hidden in gloom. By-the-by, they must make somewhat dangerous perches. I see several have already fallen. I wish, however, that I were young enough to imitate your example, and climb up to see the night settling down upon the plain. variety of fancies came into my head when I caught sight of your figure against the sky. You might have been posing for a statue of Satan defying the sun, though he would scarcely have committed the enormity of menacing the evening star! or Ajax praying for light; or, better still perhaps, a fire-worshipper of old Chaldea bidding farewell to the departing god, and imploring his return on the morrow. The most

rational of all worships, methinks, that stop short of a First Cause; for certainly the sun is the god of our system, by which all things live and move and have their being, And if people want an 'express image' to worship, they can nowhere find a nobler,—though the students who dwell in owl's light don't see enough of its glories to know that. Perhaps you have turned Zoroastrian;—by the way, were the Druids sunworshippers?—and my next guess is the right one. You have finished your work, and were returning thanks to the giver of light?"

"I have finished my work, and am now at your lordship's service," said James, lifting the bundle of papers and implements which he had been putting together during these observations. "The carriage is on the side next the town?"

"Yes, but I really cannot tell in which direction that is; it has become so dark."

"There is the north star, and the town lies nearly south, so that we shall find it this way," said James, walking on with his load.

Lord Littmass followed, and as they drove back towards Salisbury, Maynard, who had finally made up his mind to adhere to his plan of saying nothing about Margaret until the time should come when he could claim her on the strength of his own independence, gradually returned to his old cordial relations with his guardian, and talked unreservedly of the progress he had made with his preparations for his enterprise, and his reasons for selecting Salisbury for his head-quarters during the interval.

"Surely the happiest of lives," said Lord Littmass, "is that of the student whose position accords with his ambitions. Without care for the means of living, or wealth to tempt him to luxury and idleness; without the distraction of exacting friends or inconsiderate acquaintances; above all, without wife or children to harass him by anxieties for their health or their welfare,—he can pursue the way of knowledge and usefulness in light marching order, the envy of his heavily weighted fellows, and the real lever that moves the None but those who, whether married or world. single, have lived in society, can tell the debasing effect produced upon the mind by the innumerable little meannesses which spring inevitably from a daily contact with individuals. Life becomes an agglomeration of small personalities, amid which individual character is merged, and all larger aims are impossible. With poverty there is anxiety and sordidness. With wealth, distraction and frivolity. Isolation is the parent of intellect; solitude the nurse of thought. Now, I dare say that you have not spoken to a soul since you have been here, and have not cared to do so. You have been absorbed in your work, and you and your work have been the better for it."

"Well, I am not quite a Trappist," said James; but, on the contrary, am always glad to talk with people who have any special knowledge or gift. Many

a chat have I had with the blacksmith, who has his forge in yonder shanty, and I fancy we have each learned something from the other that may be useful some day."

"Such converse is not within my meaning, for it entails no responsibility. It is to such intimacies as involve men's hearts and lives, and fritter away their time, their brains, and their money, or its equivalent, that I refer. Intimacies which at first bid fair to crown us with all delight for ever, and then, whether through mistaken estimate of character, dissimilarity of temperament, antagonism of interests, or any other cause, turn to gall and bitterness, and make us curse the day when we placed our freedom as a hostage in fortune's hands."

Owing either to the reaction from his recent mood, or the refreshment of the cool night air, as the open carriage rolled over the dark plain, or to the circumstance of their being, not in Lord Littmass's house, where Lord Littmass was king, but as equals in a place where the younger was more at home of the two, James felt more at his ease than he had ever before been with his guardian. In answer to his last remarks he retorted with vivacity,—

"And yet, methinks, your lordship has not very rigidly adhered to this unsociable rule yourself; for, instead of having such desirable immunity from care to enable you to follow your favourite pursuits, your life has been for years burdened with responsibilities

which must have given you considerable occupation and harassment. No; admirable in principle as such quietism may appear, there is yet a flaw in the theory which makes its practice impossible. Men and women are not made so. They have affections as well as intellects, and which are quite as potent and exacting. And it is hard to say that mankind does not gain as much by the exercise of the one as of the other. Ignore the affections, and the glory of literature would vanish. Could a monk legislate, or write history, knowing nothing of the passions which, by swaying mankind, necessitate laws, and produce history. Where would art be, where religion, ay, or even science, if brain without heart ruled the day? I fancy I have learned something on this head from the schoolmen who, in their definitions of the Infinite omit altogether the finite, and aim at attaining to a comprehension of the whole while ignoring the parts. As I read the world, the age that placed imagination above facts and dispensed with proof, has past, and after it go all the miseries that superstition has wrought to man. Henceforth, no inferences are sound save those which take account of all phenomena, including those which appertain to the human affections."

"There is still a savour of the parson, if not of the priest in you," said Lord Littmass, somewhat coldly. "Do you intend to preach such doctrine, when the retention of your fellowship necessitates your taking orders?"

"I shall never be in a position to preach," returned James; "I know too little myself. But let us stop here a moment, and I will show you the kind of sermons I should like to hear preached."

They had reached the smithy which James had before referred to. Stopping the carriage, he jumped out, and tapped at the door. It was opened by a woman who looked distrustfully out into the darkness. She was soon reassured by James's cheerful voice, saying,—

"Well, Mrs. Mason, and how is your husband tonight? I am come to say good-bye. Has he turned in yet?"

"Oh, sir, is it you, and are you leaving these parts? My man is asleep now. He was but poorly this evening, and I don't like to rouse him. He will be vexed indeed not to see you again. And so shall I, for I can never thank you enough. You have made a new man of him, and a new life for me and mine."

"Well, I won't come in, then, but go away wishing you well, and that it may last. Here is what I promised to bring you. Keep it against another rainy day. Remember me to Mason. Good-bye."

"This poor fellow," said James to Lord Littmass, as they resumed their route, "was one of the most contentious demagogues and infidels I ever met. I had had two or three talks with him when he was laid up by a kick from a horse that he was shoeing. My difficulty had been to convince him that he did not

know quite enough just yet to reform the world either in politics or in religion. And the example came in handily to enable me to show him that it was not likely he should, since he couldn't even follow his own trade, which he had worked at all his life, without getting bowled over by one of the very creatures he knew most about. That rather bothered him, and I got him to promise to read a small volume, containing selections from the four Gospels, for he was as ignorant as a horse about many things he had been in the habit of declaiming most loudly against. Next time I called, he referred to the book and asked whether it was all plain sailing to me. I said, 'No, of course not; but what was it that had been puzzling him?' He said he should be glad to know what I understood by Christianity. I asked what he had read last. He pointed to the parable of the Prodigal Son. 'Do you mean that you do not like the elder brother?' I asked. He said he was just one of your regular hypocritical respectabilities, and abused him and his kind in terms which I need not repeat. When he had done, I said, 'Exactly so. Now we get to my idea of Christianity. Supposing that elder brother to have left his comfortable home, and gone out into the wilderness to seek and save his lost younger brother; I should say that he was a fair example of what a Christian should be.' My friend was completely dumbfoundered for a moment, and then, in unconscious imitation of Lessing, said, 'Well, sir, if that

be the meaning of it, it's a great pity people don't give up religion and try Christianity.' From that moment his whole character has been revolutionised, as you may gather from the woman's remark. Here we are, near home. Will you come to my lodgings, and have such supper as my landlady can give us, or will you be set down at the hotel?"

"Thank you, I will go to the hotel, but shall be be glad to see you at breakfast to-morrow. I hope you will be ready in time to accompany me to London afterwards. I can give you a bed for the rest of your stay in England."

The offer was made in a way that implied an expectation of its acceptance, and as James saw no reason to decline it, he did accept it, little thinking however, that it sprang from Lord Littmass's desire to keep him in sight until he should sail for Mexico, and deprive him of any chance of going nearer to Margaret's neighbourhood. James's sentiments, domestic and religious, had revived his alarm, for he thought they denoted an inclination both towards matrimony and towards a cure of souls, which, under the designation of a college living, is the usual mode of exit from a state of collegiate celibacy.

CHAPTER XXI.

Longing for some assurance of Margaret's regard to comfort and sustain him in his absence, Maynard again had recourse to Dame Partridge as a medium of communication. His note to her, and letter to Margaret, brought him the following replies on the eve of his departure:—

"DEAR SIR,

"Pray be content with this one writing, and do not ask for another. I cannot tell you why, but duty and prudence forbid me to do as you wish. My young lady is nicely. Time and patience alone can help.

"Yours respectfully and obediently,
"Jane Partridge."

The other, signed simply "M. W.," ran thus:-

"I knew not before how much I loved the sea. It is the only friend I have to converse with here. I bathe in it, and sing to it, and read my translations aloud to it, sitting on a jutting point of rock.

Thank you so much for the task. I have glanced over the story, and found it delightful. It deserves my choicest English. My best wishes and grateful regards go with you to Mexico. Happily returned, you shall find my task accomplished."

James did not tell Margaret of his deeper purpose in the selection he had made, and that he trusted, by means of the intensely refined sentimentalism of "Aslauga's Knight," to convert her abstract affectionateness into a concrete personal attachment. His idea was, that the spectacle of the true knight wearing his life away in devotion to the dead ideal of his historical mistress could scarcely fail to excite in her a desire to possess a devoted knight of her own, and to reward his worship with the more solid solace of her real and living self.

Three letters which came from Maynard about four months after his departure, contain as much of the history of his expedition as it is necessary to give, before we return to the party at Linwood Manor.

" Near Guanaxuato, Mexico.

"I believe, dear Margaret, you never in your life have looked to the future, but were always content with a present which allowed you to dream about the past. It used to be much the same with me. Absorbed in the historical, the scientific, the philosophical, or the abstract, the future always had for me an ideal instead of a real significance. It was a poem to

be read, rather than a fact to be enacted. You have thanked me for what I taught you. Will you be very much surprised to be told, that you have taught me far more than I you? Yet I fear that such is indeed the case. A knowledge, too, none the less important in that you did not intend to impart it, and were utterly unconscious even of having it in your power to do so. It is good for you to exercise your mind in thinking rather than in reverie, so I leave you this enigma to ponder.

"I wish I could have seen you in your sea-side retreat, so as to have the picture of your surroundings as well as of yourself in my mind. I had a surprise shortly before I sailed. I was at Stonehenge, having gone there about some of those old theories of mine I used to inflict upon you in our long talks. I was in the dark, on the top of one of the big stones, and Lord Littmass suddenly appeared to me. returning to London, I fancy from seeing you. But he did not tell me anything of you. He never spoke to me of you but once, and then he said what I hoped might turn out a mistake, for it wounded my selfishness. Even affection is selfish sometimes. He implied that there is a barrier between us which wealth alone can surmount. It is in the hope of getting over that barrier that I have crossed the Atlantic again, and climbed the Sierra Madre of Mexico. Throughout my six weeks upon the sea it ever seemed as if you were near to me, for the same element held us both.

and formed a chain of sympathy. So vivid at times was the feeling, that I could not help fancying you to be bathing, and that water had become for the nonce a good conductor!

"Once ashore and toiling through the burning lands which are well called Tierras Calientes, you seemed to retreat from me bodily, but only to diffuse yourself over my whole idea of things. I found myself inquiring the best season for making such a journey, thinking it would never do for you at the time I made it. As I mounted towards the high table lands, which alone are really habitable, I inquired,—again for your sake !--if there were no easier route: and learning that the capital city of Mexico is approachable only by the wretchedest roads, I found myself devising an improvement on the litters here in use, so that you might be gently transported to these heights. when the shocks of an earthquake frightened the inhabitants out into the streets, I thought how easily I could construct for you a little dwelling of wood and iron that should be quite earthquake-proof. people here have done something to diminish the danger by building mainly on the ground, but I could improve upon them if you were here to make it worth while. Thus, already are you in anticipation the founder of a new order of architecture!

"As I looked down into the barrancas, as the deep wooded hollows of these vast plateaux are called, and then up to the snowy peaks in the distance, I thought that though the natives may like to bury themselves in those fertile but stifling recesses, the free airs and wide outlook of the loftier regions would better suit your Teutonic nature.

"In Mexico city itself I found much to admire. It has a captivating exterior, and is by no means devoid of such comforts as I never before thought to care about, but now covet as necessary for you; supposing, of course, anything should ever occur to induce you to travel hither. Unluckily it is subject to swamps, being built on a lower level than is sometimes attained by the neighbouring lakes, whose water is apt to percolate through into the city.

"While there, I had much work consulting lawyers and examining legal documents. Then there were mining agents to be dealt with, and lastly, the authorities, who were profuse in verbal civilities, assuring me, after the manner of Spaniards, which some admire, but which I detest as being grossly insincere, and wasting so many words, that the whole country was mine, but at the same time endeavoured to plunder me liberally by their exactions.

"What interested me most, I think, next to the ancient remains, was the sight of the President, whose acquaintance I was so fortunate as to make. If you can imagine a Hindoo Governor-General of India, a red Indian President of the United States, a Maori Governor of New Zealand, or a "black fellow" of Australia, you will understand the feeling excited by

Juarez, a full-blooded aboriginal Indian, whose race has survived the whole series of Mexican conquests, Olmec and Toltec, Aztec and Spanish, being President of the country, in preference to any Spaniard. Not that he was elected to his present dignity. He was judge of the supreme court; and only succeeded on the death of the President and Vice-President.

"After getting matters in a proper train, I started with an armed escort for the place of my destination. It went much against the grain with me to have this guard. I have always got on very well when left to my own resources among savages; but the Mexicans are not savage enough for that, and I was assured that it was absolutely necessary as a protection against the brigands, who infest the country in spite of all the Government can do.

"My journey up here lay through some noble scenery, amid which the snowy peak of *Iztaccihuatl*, or 'white woman,' appeared as conspicuously as did in my imagination a certain fair damsel of my acquaintance, who, among the people out here, would indeed be reckoned the fairest of white women.

"Well, to conclude, before I quite tire you. My task is, for the present, well nigh finished, and, I am rejoiced to say, augurs most favourably. I shan't trouble you with particulars. Those may be reserved for Lord Littmass and my employers. But I think there is little doubt but that, after a short stay in England, I shall return hither for a lengthened

sojourn. Whether it will be for a life of joy or of sorrow will not depend upon myself. My fate is in your hands.

"J. M."

From Maynard's official report to Mr. Tresham it is sufficient to make the following extracts:—

"I beg to report my arrival at Mexico, and subsequently at Guanaxuato.

"On reaching the capital I lost no time in finding out Don Silva, the agent to whom I brought letters. He is one of the most respectable procuradors, or solicitors, in Mexico. Having examined my credentials, he placed himself most cordially at my disposition, and greatly facilitated my search among the Government records for verifications of the statements made by the representatives of the late proprietors of the Real de Dolóres, and in proving the validity of the On these two important points I am fully title. satisfied with the results of my inquiries. It is true that the Government returns on which the royalty is paid are considerably below the actual amount stated in the private archives of the family, but the difference is not greater than is justified by the custom of the country, all mines being assessed on a very low estimate of their average yield.

"The title is indisputably good, a rare circumstance in this country, and one that greatly enhances the value of the property; and the mortgagees are ready to hand over the requisite certificates on receiving payment in cash to the extent of one-third of their claims, and a covenant to pay the remainder by equal half-yearly instalments, extended over a space of five years; they undertaking to keep the offer open for six months.

"Having completed my preliminary work in the capital, I started for Guanaxuato, accompanied by a confidential clerk of the agent, a skilled engineer and surveyor, and a professional working miner. The journey cost more than I could have wished, as we were strongly advised, on account of the disturbed state of the country, to travel with a rather numerous escort. We were fifteen in number, all mounted on horses. I expect, on my return, to dispose of the latter for as much as they cost me.

"We were unmolested throughout the journey, owing, I am assured, to the precautions taken. The mine lies about fifteen miles from the town of Guanaxuato, and a little over a hundred from Mexico. It lies on a ridge or spur that runs out from the eastern slope of the Sierra Madre, at an elevation so great as to secure a bracing climate throughout the year. It is in the district of the famous 'Silver Ridge,' and possesses a distinguishing characteristic from the whole of the surrounding range, in being admirably wooded with pine, cedar, and oak.

"An inspection of the works showed that the old machinery has fallen into a very bad state, and must be almost entirely replaced; and the walls enclosing the *Hacienda*, a protection necessary against Indian and other brigands, require considerable repair.

"Finding the excavations full of water, I set a party to work, cutting a drift through the hill-side, in order to drain the principal shafts, while, together with the surveyor, I visited the principal Real in the neighbourhood, in order to examine their method of working, and also, if practicable, to ascertain the position and direction of their vein. The mine in question boasts possession of the finest lode in the district, perhaps in Mexico. It is a single solid vein, averaging over a hundred feet in thickness, and singularly rich in sulphurets of silver.

"Of the peculiarities and direction of this important vein I made a careful examination; and, tracing it for several miles in the direction of the *Dolóres* mine, I had the great satisfaction of finding myself brought so directly towards the spot where my party was at work, that only the interference of a deep ravine prevented my discovering a visible connection between the two portions of the vein. The inclosed diagram (A) will suffice to prove identity in this respect; a valuable element in the prospects of success, owing to the high character of the mine I had visited.

"During the few days occupied in draining the old shaft, I analysed specimens of ores from the two mines, and also set some men to work washing for gold. From the results thus obtained I satisfied myself, not only that the *Dolóres* lode is the continuation of its valuable neighbour, but that it maintains its excellent character throughout; and moreover, that in addition to the yield of silver, a considerable profit may yearly be made by the gold-washings.

"Sketch (B) exhibits the condition of the various shafts, and the extent in each direction that the vein has been worked, as compared with the limits of the property. The time and means at my disposal were insufficient to enable me to verify in all cases the accuracy of the representations originally made to you, owing to the prevalence of water, and the falling in of some of the levels. But, by measuring the heaps of refuse at the mouth of each shaft and at the works, I have been able to form an approximate estimate of the lengths extracted, and to compare it with the statements made by the vendors.

"On this, as on all other points, I may say with confidence that the representations which have been made are characterised by remarkable accuracy, and that thorough good faith seems to me to pervade the entire transaction. Not merely are the ores good, but they are abundant, and easily accessible. Whence it follows that a handsome return may be anticipated from a moderate outlay; and this, at an early date after commencing operations.

"It only remains to speak of the political condition of the country, in regard to the safe and permanent carrying on of such operations.

"The results of the conversations I have held on this subject with the principal foreigners and natives are, briefly, these: that the chronic perturbations to which the country is liable are likely to continue, until they culminate in a foreign intervention; but that mining property is the last that is likely to suffer seriously by the exactions of any party that may be in power. The mines, especially those worked by foreign companies and capital, form so important an element in the wealth of the country, that it would be suicidal for any government to seriously injure them. The managers, moreover, have a certain safeguard in their ability to check or suspend the yield in times of unusual danger, without, in the long run, materially diminishing the profits of the working. This is done by restricting operations to the extraction of ores, the reduction of metal being reserved for a more favourable season. Similar precautions are taken with regard to the transport of metals to the coast for shipment. The impression of those best qualified to judge is that, whether there be any foreign intervention in Mexican affairs or not, no government will incur the risk and odium which would arise from the subjection of foreign, and especially mining, interests to ill usage.

"I purpose returning to England so soon as I have made all the arrangement; necessary for completing the purchase to the utmost point possible to me."

To Lord Littmass Maynard wrote as follows:-

"MY DEAR LORD LITTMASS,

"I have deferred writing to you until I should have definite intelligence to send. The mail that takes this letter takes also my report to the chairman of the company, which you will doubtless see. I need not repeat, therefore, what I have there said. You will observe that, having written it for City men, I have endeavoured to adopt the style which such people are supposed to prefer, as was early impressed on me by the following story,—

"Certain City magnates, desiring to do honour to the younger Pitt, commissioned a scholar to write an epitaph for the monument they proposed to erect to his memory. The epitaph was accordingly written, and contained an eloquent recapitulation of the minister's services to his country, ending with the words, 'and he died poor.' This was altogether too simple for their tastes, and savoured, moreover, of the workhouse. So they amended it thus, 'and he departed this life in indigent circumstances.'

"Of the business that brought me here, I may say decidedly that the mine promises splendidly. So much so, that on my return to Mexico city, I went thoroughly into the history of the circumstances which have kept it idle so long. Its very wealth seems to have been the cause, for, under a divided ownership, it led to a bitter family squabble, and costly legal proceedings, to defray the expenses of which it was finally ordered to be sold.

"The one point on which there is room for uneasiness consists in the unsettled state of the country, and the grasping character of the short-lived governments, which spring up in rapid succession to each other.

"I do not mean you to infer that the Mexicans are worthy of a better government than they have, or can I believe that nothing can regenerate Mexico, except a totally new régime. The Spanish race in America is, in Yankee phrase, 'played out,' and the country is ready to fall, as a ripe plum, into the hands of the United States. In the meantime, the cry among the foreign population is for protection by their own governments. Nothing but fear or force will, they say, induce the native authorities to observe even the semblance of honesty in their dealings; and having, under a pledge of security and fairness, induced foreign merchants and others to settle in the country, those who suffer by ill usage see no plea of right to hinder their respective governments from insisting on the observance of good faith towards their respective citizens.

"The almost universal feeling of the foreigners is in favour of an intervention, which shall either enforce the authority of the President in his desire to fulfil the national obligations, or supersede native government altogether. I confess that, abstractedly speaking, I cannot see the matter in this light. The country belongs to the Mexicans, and if they choose to produce what others consider a bad article in the way of government, and make their country uninviting, that is their own affair. They may be supposed to consider such government as suited to themselves; and foreigners, who have come here knowing what to expect, have no right to decline taking the bad with the good. It is a speculation, in calculating the probabilities of which, the elements of politics and national character must not be left out of account.

"A number of the leading Englishmen here are drawing up a representation to our government for me to take home. This I propose to place in your hands, hoping that your influence may effect something, though the memorial goes farther than I approve. You will now have a personal interest in the matter. The value of the company's property will be greatly enhanced by any measure that will ensure security. I believe that, on both policy and principle, it should be confined to affording friendly advice and material aid, if desired, to the existing government.

"In spite, however, of any drawback, I consider that no time should be lost in completing the purchase and commencing operations. Three or four years' working on the method I am contemplating will, I am satisfied, cover the entire outlay, and leave a hand-some profit besides.

"I propose to return to England with the mail that follows this, and trust to find matters so far advanced in providing the capital, &c., that I may be able very

shortly to return and get to work: supposing, as I hope may be the case, that the company will be sufficiently satisfied with the conduct of my present commission to desire my farther services. have no hesitation in undertaking the entire management, now that I have had the advantage of living at one of the country Reales, and daily watching and helping in all the operations. The mine which I fixed upon for this purpose has been most successful for many years, under the management of a scientific Englishman, whose own share in the profits, for he is also a partner in it, sometimes reaches ten thousand pounds a-year. At the head of a large staff of native miners and English artisans, numbering altogether some ten thousand, with large revenues at his disposal, his territory fortified by a high wall, and a body of troops in his own pay to escort him and his treasure across the country, he holds the position of a small sovereign, and is received by the ruler of the country almost as an equal.

- "Here is a sample of the dialogues which occur when a general belonging to the party in opposition applies to the director of a mine for a loan.
- "General says, with a profusion of compliments, that he and his friends fully recognise the value of such institutions, and would not injure them on any account; 'but the fact is, we are sadly in need of supplies.'
 - "'Doubtlessly,' returns the director, 'we have it

in our power to be of use to each other. I presume that you will engage to refrain from enlisting my men. They would be useless to you as soldiers, for they would take to the hills directly they had joined you. Thus we should both lose them, and I should be disabled from serving you in the future.'

- "' Certainly. Your stipulation is but reasonable."
- "'And you have no objection to give me bills on your party, payable when it comes into power?'
 - "' None whatever."
 - "'Good; and what amount do you require?'
- "The general says, so many thousand dollars a week, or a month. The money is handed over, bills are given, and they part excellent friends.
- "After a while he looks in again on the accommodating director, and says,
- "'I fear we must leave your pleasant neighbourhood for a time. Our friends of the Government are getting too strong for us. So I propose to move on a bit. No doubt we shall pay you another visit soon, on our way back to the capital.'
- "And I am assured that they always do come back in a few months, and always do pay on coming into power; so fully is honesty recognised in this country as the best policy.
- "The director whom I have been visiting was a sailor before he became a miner. Other things being equal, I see no reason why an Oxford Fellow should not rival, or even surpass his success, with such a stimulus

as will animate me. Believe me, it will be a real pleasure to me to be in any way the means of benefiting you, who have hitherto held the ægis of your protection over my life from my childhood. Forgive what I am going to mention, if I am wrong in referring to it. Our Minister in Mexico, who has been most polite to me for your sake, has told me that the Queen offered you a higher dignity in the English Peerage; but that you declined it, as requiring larger means to support it properly than you could command. I am confident that such a barrier will soon no longer exist, if you secure anything like a substantial interest in the Dolóres venture. I do not like to trust too much to a letter, which may miscarry, but I know the secret of success in silver mining. As a small capital only is necessary for the commencement of operations, you will do well to keep it in as My plan of procedure will few hands as possible. be the reverse of that followed by professional miners, who have the money of a public company to spend. Their system consists in laying out as much money as possible in labour, excavating huge shafts and tunnels, and constructing gigantic machinery, leaving it to chance to determine whether the returns shall be an equivalent for the cost. These people have their own fortune to make first, and it is no matter to them whether it comes out of the expenditure or out of the profits. Their employers come next, by a long interval: and the reason why so few mining enterprises pay, and so many people are ruined by embarking in them, is because the commencement is on such a scale that only the most exorbitant returns can compensate. Our English mode of doing many things is not favourable either to honesty or to economy. We pay our architects by a per-centage on the amount they make us expend, and a mining agent's remuneration is in proportion to the amount of wages that pass through his hands. I, on the contrary, propose to use just so much capital as will fairly start the mine, and then make it pay for its own development. course it must be somewhat longer before large dividends are obtained, but they will be larger in proportion to the outlay; the returns will not be absorbed by interest; and no one will be ruined by failure. short, I propose to work the property of the company as if it were my own, and success essential to my existence."

CHAPTER XXII.

Sophia Bevan, to whom we must now return after too long an interval, left the party soon after dinner, to keep her engagement with Lady Bevan, and Edmund Noel was obliged to remain to entertain the guests during her absence, which lasted the whole evening, and for which Lady Bevan's indisposition was the plea assigned. Noel was a good deal chagrined at being thus detained, as he had really good grounds for wishing to get to London without loss of more time than would enable him to visit Stonehenge by the way. He had undertaken to write a paper on ancient worships as indicated by their remains, for one of those advanced and liberal periodical Reviews to which the national mind of England is indebted for very much of its progress in late years. hardly completed his article, when the editor wrote to tell him that a book on a kindred subject had recently made its appearance, a book so remarkable for its research, originality, and suggestiveness, that his treatise would be almost valueless unless he included the consideration of it. He also recommended a visit to Salisbury Plain, in order to compare notes

and verify certain points in connection with the remains there, a list of which points was inclosed in the letter.

The consideration that the cause of his detention was a feminine caprice did not diminish his annoyance. As if divining what was passing in his mind, Sophia, before she had been an hour away, sent him this note,—

- "Don't fret. You can't go to-morrow, for Lordship has engaged the whole of the coach; and I want you. Good night."
- "How can I possibly help you in Lord Littmass's affairs?" was Noel's somewhat abrupt salutation to Sophia next morning, while waiting for the party to assemble for breakfast.
- "Others are concerned besides Lord Littmass, and as you know, or at least have seen, three of those who are interested, I think no harm can be done by making you a partner in the information I obtained last night."
 - "From Lady Bevan?"
- "From Lady Bevan, who has at length relieved herself of a weight by sharing it with me, and who approves of my telling you, of course, in confidence. So, after breakfast, I want to drive you to Porlock Cottage, when I will make a clean breast of it.—I declare you are beginning to look interested now.

Well, I like to see men with the original sin in them. But it is of no use this time; your rare specimen of yesterday morning has flown the museum ere this."

"Do you mean to say that my morning stroll has had the effect of frightening Lord Littmass and a whole household out of the neighbourhood?"

"Not exactly. It is rather the occasion than the cause. But I will tell you more by-and-by."

"I found mamma eager to consult me yesterday evening," said Sophia, on taking her seat in the pony carriage, "so that I had no need to question But even now, after hearing the story she told me, I cannot make out why she is so much affected by it. She may have failed in her duty, but one's duties towards a semi-idiot relative are not very onerous, and the child has been well taken care of, though not exactly by her. The most curious part of it, to me, is that a man like James Maynard should be such a goose as—but I forget. I haven't told you the beginning of it all. Know, then, that once upon a time, a certain sister of Lady Bevan's was deceived and run away with by a certain Captain Waring: soon after which event both died, leaving an unhappy child whom they had named Margaret. This Margaret being in every way sickly and feeble, the family were only too glad to let Lord Littmass take steps for providing for her, somewhere away out of their sight. The father, who had gone to India before she was born, died

there soon afterwards, leaving everything to the mother; and she died soon after her child's birth, leaving it to Lord Littmass's care, and also making him the child's heir. The child was accordingly taken good care of, partly at home and partly abroad; and seems now to have grown a good deal out of her original weakness. Mr. Maynard, from often meeting her at Lord Littmass's as a child, took an interest in her, and has ended by falling violently in love with her. Her eccentricity, which took an artistic turn during the early part of her sojourn abroad, changed its direction——"

"I really don't see," interrupted Noel, "why Lord Littmass's son should not decide for himself in such a matter. His father, having disowned him, can claim no authority over him, moral or legal. The girl is not Lord Littmass's private property, I suppose, that he should dictate her future. Let Lord Littmass's son and Lord Littmass's ward make a match of it if they please. It is nobody's business but their own."

"Easily settled; but if you had heard me out, you would have learnt that there are several obstacles to such a solution. *Imprimis*—the ward does not care to marry the son, or anybody else. She is *dévote*. This is Lord Littmass's account. And, secondly, Lord Littmass's family pride, which, as you probably do not know, is inordinate, will never permit him to let his son, whom he must acknowledge before death, or

after, marry under a false name, and then marry a girl who has no name."

- "Is Miss Waring a Catholic?"
- "Oh, no; poor thing, she does not understand the difference between one religion and another. Her education has given her but a confused idea of such matters. Lord Littmass says that she would enter a convent or marry a Protestant without being aware of any divergence of opinion being implied by the two courses."
- "Of course, if she lives, her guardian would wish her to enter a convent, that he might have the advantage of his survivorship."
- "By no means of course. She has been in one, and left it because she did not like it. Besides, he could not object to his son having her fortune, unless he disapproved of the lady;—unless he be a worse man than even your instinct would make him out to be. No; there is some motive which I do not see that leads him to object. His pride, great as it is, is scarcely sufficient to account for it; for the world need not know anything about the marriage. His name is not involved."
- "What made him leave Linnwood in such a hurry?"
- "Oh, I forgot I had not told you that. Your escapade of yesterday morning made him drive over to the cottage directly after we had started for Waters' Meet. He there found Margaret Waring reading a

letter, which had that moment come from Mr. Maynard. He asked her who her correspondent was, and learnt that his son had arrived two days before from Mexico, and finding Lord Littmass absent from London, had written to tell her that he should run down into Devonshire and see her at once, as he had good news to give her. Upon hearing this, Lord Littmass told the dame who acts as her duenna to pack up her clothes, hastened back here, and had a long talk with Lady Bevan, and then went and took Margaret in the Minehead coach to meet the train at Bridgewater, in order to get her safe out of Mr. Maynard's way in his own house in London."

- "Monster! Then what on earth are you taking me over to Porlock for?"
- "To satisfy my curiosity, and get some information for mamma."
 - "We shall find some one there, then?"
- "Yes, the old dame, who has tended her from child-hood. I want to talk to her."

The road now becoming steep and rough, it took all Sophia's attention to manage her ponies. The remainder of the drive was passed almost in silence, as they jolted through a wood that became more and more dense. At length, the road taking a sharp turn, they came suddenly upon a fence and a gate, and Noel was in the act of alighting to open the gate, when a man stepped forward and threw it open for them. Both Sophia and Noel were surprised to see

a stranger in that unfrequented spot, and looked scrutinisingly at him. Had it been in Germany, the man would have passed without remark as a travelling student. His dress, which was something between that of a clergyman and a tourist, was dusty, as if he had walked far. He carried a small knapsack on his back, and a stout stick in his hand. His face was sunburnt; his hair, which was long and dark, flowed freely over the back of his neck; and a broad brow, and small, intellectual features, showed him at once a scholar and a gentleman.

The two parties gazed for a moment as in surprise at each other, and the stranger was stepping aside to allow the carriage to enter the enclosure, when Sophia and Noel exclaimed, in the same breath,

"James Maynard!"

Hearing his name pronounced, the stranger raised his hat and looked up inquiringly.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Maynard," said Sophia, "but we had just been speaking of you, and were so surprised at seeing you in this place at the moment."

Looking from one to the other, and failing altogether to recognise either of the occupants of the carriage, he said, in a faltering tone,

"My memory is a bad one for faces, and I fear I must plead complete ignorance as to whom I have the honour of being addressed by. Perhaps, however, you will have the kindness to tell me if this road

leads to Porlock Cove. Or, rather, forgive my apparent indecision, I will not trouble you to delay on my account. I can easily go on and ascertain for myself."

He evidently wished to avoid further observation, but Sophia had no notion of allowing him to escape thus, so she exclaimed, in a voice which was more than usually exuberant and animated, owing to the effort she was making to suppress the tremor of anxiety which this unexpected meeting and recognition had occasioned in her,

- "Mr. Maynard, I am Miss Bevan, whom not so very many years ago you took down to dinner at Lord Littmass's; and this is Mr. Noel, who recollects you at Oxford. We are going to the cottage where Lord Littmass's ward, Miss Waring, was staying up to last night, in order to see her old nurse, Mrs. Partridge; and if you will jump into this seat behind us, I shall have great pleasure in taking you there."
- "Are you sure of what you say?" he asked, in a tone of unconcealed dismay.
- "As to my being Miss Bevan, and this gentleman Mr. ——?"
- "No, no; as to Margaret—I mean Miss Waring—having gone?"
- "Her guardian was staying with me in this neighbourhood until yesterday. And he left my house in the afternoon, in order to take her to London by this morning's coach."

Hearing this, Maynard staggered back against the gatepost as if struck by a sudden shot.

- "Too late, too late!" he murmured. "What have I done to this man, that he should torment me thus!"
- "Say rather, what have Lord Littmass and his ward done to you, that you should pursue them thus?"

Sophia's ruse succeeded in rousing him from the stupor of despair in which his disappointment had plunged him, for he said,—

- "Tell me what you know, and why you, too, side against me."
- "Believe me, I do not side against you. I only spoke in that way to rouse you from the useless grief to which you were about to give way. On the contrary, I would be your friend. I have known you, or your family, long, and have always been desirous of continuing the friendship."
- "You! my family!" exclaimed Maynard, in unfeigned astonishment.
- "I mean that Lady Bevan, my step-mother, Lord Littmass's cousin, who lives together with me, will be happy to see you at Linnwood Manor, if you will gratify her by a visit. Do let me drive you home with us after we have been to the cottage."
- "London. You said London, I think," was his reply. "Thank you, I have no need to go farther in this direction. I wish you a good-morning." And he turned to depart.
 - "Stay! Mr. Maynard," cried Sophia, imperatively.

"The longest way in appearance, is sometimes the shortest in reality; and I know enough to be aware that you will not reach your goal the later by seeming to turn your back upon it just now. For the present I take charge of you, and insist upon your getting up and accompanying us."

As if magnetised by the ambiguity of her words, and the energy of her utterance, he quietly acquiesced, and climbed into the seat behind Miss Bevan and Noel with the aspect of one in a dream.

Neither of the party spoke as they drove over the quarter of a mile that led to the cottage. Their approach was noiseless over the road thick covered with fallen leaves. On reaching the door at the rear of the house, they had to ring the bell more than once before the dame, who was the sole inmate within at the moment, could be made to understand that visitors had arrived. She made her appearance at last, out of breath with the work at which she had been engaged, that of packing up, and full of wonder at seeing the carriage and its occupants.

"You don't remember me, I dare say, Mrs. Partridge," began Sophia, "but I am a friend of Lord Littmass's, with whom he was staying up to yesterday; and I have brought two other friends to see the cottage, and any pretty things you can show us of Miss Margaret's before they are all removed."

And they entered the cottage as she spoke, Noel hitching the ponies to a tree.

- "It must be Miss Sophy, but---" began the dame, when the young lady broke in,
- "But not the pretty Miss Sophy you used to call me years and years ago. She came to an end with the accident that spoilt her prettiness, and in place of her there came this ugly me. Did you never hear of it?"
- "Oh, dear, yes, miss. Now I do call it to mind; but what with following my young lady about to foreign parts, and what with one trouble and another, I had clean forgotten your misfortune. But you've got the bright eyes and the cheery voice still, miss, that always did one good to listen to. But, mayhap, you are not a miss still, miss?"
- "Very much amiss, I assure you, my dear old dame, and likely to remain so."
- "Why, if it isn't Mr. James!" cried the old woman, now for the first time observing Maynard, as he leant against the door, impatient of the trivial conversation that was going on.

Hereupon Sophia considerately took Noel into the other room. When they were alone, the dame said,

- "Oh, dear, sir, why did you write? I always feared his lordship would find it out; and he came in just as Miss Margaret was reading your letter yesterday, and took her off to London directly."
- "Did he see my letter? Does he know that I wish to marry her?"
 - "Indeed, I cannot say for certain, sir; but he

must surely think that he has good reason to prevent your meeting; and what can it be but that?"

- "Do you think he is opposed to our marriage, then?"
- "Indeed I do, sir, at present. But I can say nothing for certain."
- "And Margaret, how did she seem to feel the sudden summons? Did she leave no message for me?"
- "Yes, sir, she knew how sorry you would be to come all this way and miss her, and she left this note for you."

Seizing and opening it, James read-

"I truly rejoice in your good news, and trust that prosperity is beginning for you. My guardian found me reading your letter. He asked how long you had been wishing to marry me, and said that he was sincerely grieved at its being impossible. He was so kind, and said he should do his best to console you for the disappointment. He was sorry to hurry me away so suddenly, but was obliged to return to London at once, and thought it better to take me with him, and let nurse follow in a few days. I shall expect to see you there soon.

"MARGARET."

Maynard sank into a seat, and read this note over two or three times. Presently, as if unconscious of anyone being present, he murmured, "Can she love me? Surely such love as mine must create love in any woman who is worthy to be loved. It must be that she is scarcely woman yet. Ah, well, when it comes, it will not be the weaker for delay."

Looking up to question the dame about her, he found that she had joined Sophia and Noel in the other room, and was occupied in conversation. So he waited and pondered.

- "Who painted this?" asked Noel, pointing to a copy of Titian's "Fruit and Flower Girl," which stood on a side table.
- "My young lady, to be sure, sir, when she was in Rome."
- "See," said he to Sophia, "though the mechanical part of the painting is that of a beginner, what a refined and spiritual air she has given the figure. I have often looked at the original, and regretted that Titian had been induced to put so much coarseness into his picture, and here is the very thing I had imagined as best fitted for it."
- "Titian," replied Sophia, "preferred to take his model from robust health, rather than pale sentimentality. Besides, he meant that for a portrait of his daughter. But, tell me, dame, what has Miss Waring been doing these last few years?"
- "She went to Italy between three and four years ago with his lordship's sister, who died there. Mr. James came one winter to Rome, and took her to see everything, and we stayed on the summer after that, and then she

became very ill, and begged to go into a convent, meaning an Italian one; and his lordship sent her to one in France, and I returned to London."

"But what did she want to go into a convent for? Is she Catholic?"

"I am sure, miss, I cannot tell what name to call She is just that good, that it seems to be letting her down to put her among any of the religions. There never was born angel more spirit than Miss Margaret, or more simple, true, and pure. And so pious: where anybody else prayed, she would pray. I have seen her kneel, with a couple of brigand-looking fellows beside her, by the cross in the middle of the Coliseum, just as natural and easy as in the great cathedral. And I have seen her do the same on the top of a hill, where we had gone for a walk, just because, she said, the air was so soft, and the scenery so beautiful, it made her happy to be alive. And when I have been in her studio, as she called her little painting-room in Rome, I am sure I have seen her standing and praying before she began to paint: not aloud, she never did that, but lost, as in were, in a dream. One day I ventured to say, 'If anybody but me saw you, miss, they would think you were worshipping the figures in your own picture.' 'Well, nurse,' she said, after thinking a bit, 'I dare say a good many people have been called idolaters with less reason. I fancy I recognise God in everything beautiful, and it must be a harmless idolatry to worship Him. I only know, that the more I try to do so the more beauty I find comes into my pictures.' And, bless you, miss, though my young lady only copied other people's pictures, the old masters, as they are called, everybody did say that she made them more beautiful than the old masters had done."

- "What made her think of going into a convent?"
- "I never rightly understood. She never was but a child in heart, and I sometimes fear she will never be quite fit for this world. She said, once, she wanted to cultivate her soul; but I thought it was rather her body that needed the cultivation. I think she took a friendship for some nuns in Rome, and wanted a little society, and thought she would be happier among people who devoted their lives to praying and singing and charity. Besides, she was really ill, and fancied she was going to die, so low did the fever bring her. How she ever lived through the time at the convent, unless it was the change of climate, is more than I can understand. But I believe the hardships did not begin till she had got better."
 - "What convent was it?"
- "A French Carmelite convent," replied the old woman, to whom, long pent up as she had been, it was a pleasure to talk about her young mistress, with any who took a friendly interest in her. It was where Lord Littmass was concerned that her speech was so restrained. "I was saying, that how she came out alive at all, especially being so weak when she

went in, is a miracle to me. Her religion is all purity and loveliness: I often think she is the real religion herself: while theirs is little but dirt, and ugliness, and misery. There is as much difference between the two as if she worshipped God and they worshipped She told me about it when she came out. -for his lordship sent me to receive her, and bring her home,—and she begged me never to mention the place again to her. After a few weeks in London, his lordship sent her here for the benefit of the sea, and she has taken a great delight in bathing every morning and evening on the sands down there. The place is so shut in and private that I had no fear of her being overlooked. Not that such a thought ever occurred to herself; she is such a boy in her enjoyment of the It was as if she was trying to wash away the memory of that nasty convent."

"Did she tell you anything about the details of the life she led there?" asked Noel.

"Was this her room in the convent?" said Sophia, taking up a small drawing.

"Yes, miss; one day, soon after we came here, she brought me that, and said, 'Nurse, dear, I have been naughty. I allowed myself to be impatient with my studies, and I did this for penance.' A condemned cell, rather than a room for a human being to live in, I call it. The floor was bare summer and winter; a little bit of a bed, without a morsel of pillow, a brown rug to lie on, and another to put over her, and no

sheet between. No soap allowed, or towel, no sponge, or basin; not even a tooth-brush, the whole five months she was there. A tiny water-jug held all that was allowed to be used for washing, and that was frozen thick in winter. There, miss, you see the crucifix and hour-glass, and the little broom she had to sweep out her cell with; and the straw chair, on which she was forbidden ever to sit: that was for the lady superior when she visited the cell, and to lay her clothes on at night. Not that they were worth taking such care of; for, besides the shoes, which the nuns themselves make out of straw, and the stockings, which are mere bits of rag sewn together, their only articles of dress are a coarse shift, a woollen petticoat, and a gown, and not another blessed thing in the world. And these clothes, such as they are, are all worn in common, and are kept in one press, and given out at regular periods, not too close together one may be sure. And there's not a bit of a lookingglass in the whole convent, so that the poor darling could not have the comfort of seeing her own sweet face; not that she ever thinks of herself; and I dare say would not have known herself if she had seen it. for when she came out her beautiful teeth were half ruined, and her complexion and hair were in such a state, from the poor living and the want of soap, that she would certainly have died in a little while. Mr. James can tell you how she looked when he saw her in London afterwards; and she had been a deal

worse than ever he saw her. It was only through a French bishop, who knew his lordship, happening to call and see her, that she ever came out alive. He took her out, and then let his lordship know."

"Well, she won't want to be a nun again," observed Sophia.

"No, miss. She has sense enough to see that religion isn't suicide, and that befouling and destroying the body is not the way to cleanse and save the soul. She found out, too, that profession is not practice; for the nuns did not turn out to be such models of perfection as she had fancied. And, only to think, if she had staid in a little longer, she would have lost her beautiful hair altogether, for they would have shaved her head, like the others."

"Of course, she could not keep up her painting or studies there," said Noel.

"Dear, no, sir. This is how they live: They all get up at half-past five, and go to bed at eleven. Part of this time is spent in making and mending their clothes, while a nun reads aloud from the Lives of the Saints. Then they scrub the chapel floor on their knees. But the greater part of each long, long day is spent in what they call devout contemplation, in rooms in which there is never a fire lighted. Indeed, in the bitterest weather there is a fire for only two hours a day in one of the rooms. And then, again, the poor things are taught to give up all their natural affections; for when news comes of the death of a relation

of any of them, the lady superior announces, 'the mother (or whatever relative it may be) of one of the sisters is dead. Let us pray for her soul.' And no nun is ever told, or knows, if it is her own mother who is dead, or some one else's. This cruel pang of uncertainty is one of the poor creatures' greatest trials, though it was not one that could befall Miss Margaret, as she had no relations to care for her, since her mother died in her infancy, and her guardian was almost a stranger to her. There was only Mr. James, who had been almost as a brother to her, and me."

"Can you believe all these horrors possible in this age?" asked Edmund of Sophia.

"Yes, and more too. Their theory of life compels it, for they hold that nature is so utterly corrupt, that the more they mortify and go against it, the more they are likely to be in the right. When I was at school in a convent near Paris, the younger girls were warned not to uncover more of themselves in washing than they could help, because the angels standing by would see them!—a caution which certainly did not conduce to their modesty, any more than it did to their cleanliness; for a more false and conscious set of creatures never were seen than those same little French minxes."

"I was wrong to speak of age in connection with the Church," returned Noel. "Incapable of advance, the centuries don't tell upon it. But it certainly is curious, that a religion based upon Judaism, whose founder, Moses, was the apostle of cleanliness, should elevate dirt into a virtue, and make physical filth emblematic of spiritual purity."

"This," added the dame, "is one of the dolls she brought away with her, dressed exactly like a nun. They make hundreds of them in the convent, and send them out for sale: for the Carmelites are very poor; and, in fact, though they call it a nunnery, it seems to me for all the world like a poorhouse."

Perceiving that Maynard was listening to this conversation, Sophia made no attempt to shorten it. had wandered from one room to the other, and back again, as if uneasy at the peculiar position in which he found himself, looking now at the ornaments which helped to give it an air of elegance, and then out of the window over the sea, until at last he found Margaret's sketch-book. Upon this he fastened, and applied himself eagerly to it for some time. It contained some recent drawings, done during her residence in the cottage. Looking carefully at these, James thought he detected signs of growth in the beloved artist's mind. The saints and angels of old had given place to healthier, because more natural, She had made several attempts to represent faithfully the sea in its various moods, and that bit of the morning and evening sky which was visible between the cliffs which hemmed in her dwelling. some of the sketches a solitary form could be seen,

either reposing at length on the water, or lying on the sands, as a waif thrown up by the sea, and waiting patiently to be reclaimed. The earlier ones were destitute of living interest. Maynard looked them all through slowly, and then turned them rapidly over, passing from one to another, as if they were words in a sentence, of which he sought the meaning. At length he seemed to have caught it; for, closing the book, he murmured words which might be taken as his interpretation of the text he had been studying:—

"Yes; Nature, Loneliness, Feeling. The missing sense is coming."

Observing that he then cast a glance towards the dame, as if wishing to speak with her, Sophia said to Edmund,—

- "Come with me down to the sea, and we will explore the whole of this little world, of which we have just missed the heroine." And they passed down over the beach to the sands where the clear blue water was breaking in gentle ripples. Looking up to the cliff on the left as she faced the sea, Sophia said,—
- "It would have been as great a surprise to you today to see me here, had you just now popped round that edge, as it was to you yesterday to see Margaret Waring."
- "Yesterday! was it but yesterday? It seems an age. I had quite forgotten it. The distress of that poor fellow put everything else out of my mind."
 - "I wonder how it will end," returned Sophia.

"Lord Littmass is not accustomed to be thwarted, and Mr. Maynard seems scarcely the man to study consequences. I suspect there is something of his father about him. I dread to think what may happen if they should clash about her."

"I really don't see that Lord Littmass has any right to coerce either of them," said Noel.

"I believe that she must have his consent to marry before she is of age, and Mr. Maynard loses his fellowship if he marries at all."

"But surely he has something of his own, or some occupation that yields him an income. At least he can take orders."

"I believe he prefers anything to doing that. Indeed, he is now engaged by a mining company in Mexico, and has just come from there. Perhaps he came down here expressly to ask her to go out with him."

"What company? Do you know its name, or any of the people in it?"

"I remember the name, because I annoyed Lord Littmass by making a joke upon it. I cautioned him against the Dolóres Mine lest he should come to grief in it."

"The Dolóres! My city uncle's new pet project. And they have employed James Maynard? How curious."

In the meantime Maynard plied the dame with questions about Margaret, how she was looking, whe-

ther she had quite recovered, and about the German task; and, above all, about her feelings with respect to himself. On all points, except the last, the old woman's replies were satisfactory to him, and he had to be content with the assurance that no one had had an opportunity of effacing any impression he might have made upon her.

At length he started up, saying,-

- "Well, good-bye, dame. I shall do my best, for, as you see, my life is in it. If I cannot see herself, I will see Lord Littmass, and then there will be an end to this hide-and-seek. If you see her first, give her my love, and tell her so."
- "Oh, pray, sir," cried the dame, "don't be so rash as to come across his lordship. If you had the law on your side, it might be all very well. But you can do nothing against Miss Margaret's guardian."
- "Very good: then I will have the law on my side. And Miss Margaret's husband will defy Miss Margaret's guardian. Good-bye."
 - "Won't you speak to Miss Sophy first, sir?"
- "What for? No, no; I have no time to lose in talking."
- "Edmund," said Sophia to Noel, as they returned towards the house, "it is very evident to me that this poor fellow will do little good for himself, without the kindly intervention of some one who knows Lord Littmass well. Now, my plan is to take him back with us to Linnwood, and all consult together with Lady Bevan,

who has more influence with his lordship than all the rest of the world; and that, if she approves, you accompany him to London to-morrow. I would go myself, and bully Lord Littmass into behaving pretty, rather than see those two lives made unhappy by his pride and obstinacy."

- "It is rather a complicated relationship to meddle with," said Noel. "Unknown father and disowned son, and ward who is nobody."
- "Never mind; I will threaten to expose him if nothing else will do. He little dreams who has got hold of his secret."
- "Mr. Maynard!" cried Sophia, approaching the window, "I have come to take you back with us to Linnwood."
- "Lord bless you, miss, he has been gone these ten minutes," said the dame, coming out towards them.
 - "Gone! Where?"
- "Back to London, miss. I asked him to speak to you first."
- "How rude of him. Never mind. I don't dislike him for it. What does he mean to do when he gets there?"
- "I don't exactly know, but he means to see his lordship, I believe."
- "Is it possible that he has no suspicion that——he——is——?" said Sophia, looking keenly at the dame, and speaking very slowly.

- "That what, miss?" asked the old woman, simply.
- "Of his relationship to——? Why, you must have been living in Lord Littmass's family when he was born?"
 - "Well, miss?"
- "And you pretend ignorance that—. I mean, can you give me no clue to Lord Littmass's objection to his——to Mr. Maynard's marrying Miss Waring?"
- "I think, miss, that if her ladyship would try, she might do something in the matter. No one else."
- "Exactly what I was saying just now to Mr. Noel. You must come over and see her. Come now."
- "Thank you, miss. I should be very glad to see her ladyship again. It is a number of years since we met, but I am afraid she has not forgiven me for befriending her poor sister. Leastways, so his lordship has told me."
 - "You mean, in befriending her child?"
- "I did that, miss; but I befriended poor Mrs. Waring too, when all her family were against her."
- "Pray, how did you befriend her?" asked Sophia, drily.
- "Well, miss, you see that she and the captain were bent on coming together, in spite of everybody's opposition; and so, as I thought it was a shame to let her lose her good name by going off alone with him, and making a Scotch marriage of it, I went with them to church and saw them married respectably."
 - "You did! Why, I have always understood that

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they never were married at all, and Lady Bevan believes so of her own sister at this moment. Put on your bonnet and cloak, and come and tell her so yourself."

- "No, miss, I must not go there till my master gives me leave. He told me how harshly her ladyship thought of me, but I did not know she thought that about her own sister."
- "Then Miss Margaret is really Miss Waring, and mamma's own proper niece! I shall claim her as my cousin on the first opportunity, and insist on Lord—You won't own to knowing another secret, too?"
- "I had no notion, miss, that the marriage of my young lady's parents was doubted by anybody."
 - "Of course Lord Littmass knew of the marriage?"
 - "Not at first, miss, I think, but very soon after."
- "And he never told Lady Bevan, that her sister and his cousin did not disgrace the family after all! Oh, Lordship! Lordship! I begin to suspect there are some very large screws loose in your composition. Margaret neither an idiot nor a——. Come, Edmund; good-bye, dame. I shall have another ally now for James Maynard. He shall be my cousin, too, yet."

CHAPTER XXIII.

- "I TELL you what," said Sophia, suddenly breaking from the silence in which they had been driving during the first few minutes after they left the cottage: "we will have my proposed consultation with mamma all the same as if Mr. Maynard was with us; and she shall write to Lord Littmass, and I will add a postscript; and you shall take it with you to-morrow. And so we shall all be helping, like the fairies, to marry the prince and princess."
- "And a pretty piece of what schoolboys would call as triplex, on my part, at least, he will think it. No, no; much as I may sympathise with the actors or sufferers, you must do it without me if you are going to enact the part of a providence to these good folks."
- "That is so like you horrid men. You never will put yourselves to the least trouble to do any good to anybody but your own selves. Now my motto is, to secure what happiness I can for everybody in this world. I suppose you think that if it is to be it will be, either in this world or in another?"
 - "I suppose," rejoined Noel, "that it is to fill up

the vacuum of single life that women love so to bestow their solicitudes upon others."

- "Well, you needn't twit me with my single-hood. It may be my misfortune, but it certainly is not my fault. But you hate people to be doing anything."
- "I hate only hurry and bustle and unwarranted interference. Nature works by imperceptible attraction. Her catastrophes are but incidental. Her grace is supreme—devoid of visible effort. And I am inclined to think that woman works most effectually when she most nearly imitates nature in this respect."
- "And you would have little partial me attempt to rival the grand style of omnipotent Nature!"
- "Surely; if we wish to be considered homogeneous with the rest of that of which we are a part."
- "I have not forgotten your rudeness in calling me 'three fine days and a thunderstorm.' Arctic circle, region of frost, fog, and iceberg, I dub you: where nature works, if it work at all, in silence, and coldness, and everlasting death. My temperate, or, if you will, torrid zone, before your frozen one!" And she lashed her ponies impetuously onwards.
- "And now that the thunderstorm has cleared the air, pray tell me whether your anxiety is really to promote your end; or merely to do something, that may or may not promote it?"
 - " No, sir: much as I love doing, you ought to know

by this time that I don't go on your plan, and do mischief rather than do nothing."

- "My plan! Thunderstorm coming on again."
- "Yes, it is your plan—in spite of all I said about your hating work, which is quite true—to tease me by bringing your northern currents to chill my warm intentions and energies."
- "How dearly women love personalities! Two men would have discussed the affairs of your protégés, if they discussed them at all, without a word about their own characters, or personal relations, or anything whatever but what might throw light upon the matter. I suppose, however, that if women were scientifically educated, we should not love them so well."
- "I don't believe it would make a bit of difference. We love men just as well, whether they are scientifically educated or not. More fools we, for it is little they deserve it," said Sophia, hastily dashing away the tears which, in spite of herself, persisted in dimming her bright eyes.

Without appearing to notice her emotion, Noel continued: "If you suppose that the interference of another man will have a beneficial effect upon Lord Littmass, I think you very much mistake both his character and that of men in general. He may take from you and Lady Bevan a good deal that he would not for a moment stand from a man; especially from one almost young enough to be his grandson. The complication becomes, after your discovery of to-day,

more of a family one than ever; and the fewer the people who mix themselves up in it, the better for all parties."

- "Well, at any rate, if I find that I really need your help, you will give it to me?"
- "You have not now to learn that, I hope," said Noel in a softer tone.

CHAPTER XXIV.

- "Well, mamma," exclaimed Sophia, as soon as she found herself alone with Lady Bevan, "we've had a long talk with Dame Partridge, and we've seen James Maynard, and tried to bring him back with us; but finding Margaret was not there, he gave us the slip, and is off, no one knows where. He seems to be madly in love with this little Miss Margaret, and looks ready to play Faust, and the devil too, on her account. I shouldn't wonder if he has gone straight back to London, to find his lordship, and demand her of him. And——"
- "Does he know,—did you or the dame tell him of his father?"
- "Ah, the old woman does know that, then? I thought as much; but she was so close about her secret."
- "Then Littmass was in time to get Margaret away before James arrived? That is indeed a happy circumstance. Oh, if they had met!"
- "Unless he had got there first, and carried off the young lady before her guardian made his appearance; which would have settled matters much more satisfac-

torily, to my mind. I have always felt a craving for more relations, and I should have gained two cousins at once."

- "My dear, you forget. Fancy Lord Littmass having the child of my poor disgraced sister for his daughter-in-law. You cannot have forgotten my telling you that this poor girl was left an infant by a younger sister of mine, who was basely betrayed by the false promises of a villain, and died of her shame and a broken heart soon after he left her?"
- "No shame to her at all, dear mamma, even supposing it to be all true; and I can't think how anybody can consider it so. I shouldn't, if it happened to me, I am sure. Oh, those villain men. Why should we be blamed for their fault? I wish I had the making of the laws. But I am forgetting to tell you the great discovery I have made. Stop: do you believe old Dame Partridge has any motive for telling a lie?"

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- "A lie! about what? What has she told you?"
- "That she accompanied your sister and Captain Waring when she left her home----"
- "Yes, I know she did; and have never forgiven the part she took in encouraging their disgraceful conduct——"
- "Let me finish, please. She accompanied your sister when she went off with Captain Waring, and was present in the church when they were married."
 - "Married! Oh, if it were only true! But Litt-

mass assured us all that he had made every inquiry; and he even dismissed Partridge for allowing them to meet as they had done, and he was so kind in taking all the trouble upon himself, and sparing our feelings——"

- "Mamma, if this old woman told me the truth, what must Lord Littmass be?"
 - "Tell me more of what she said, dearest."
- "She said, in the most natural way possible, when I asked her to come here and see you, that she could not come because her master had told her that you continued to be very angry with her for the part she had taken about Mrs. Waring's marriage. She blamed the family for letting her go off with the captain alone; and, out of pure regard for her good name, she staid by her, and went to the church, and saw the wedding."
- "Can this be true? Did she say that cousin Littmass knew of this?"
- "Yes, most decidedly; for she did not know it had ever been doubted. So that her statement was not made in self-defence, or in contradiction of any other. But this is not the only error you have been allowed to remain in. In Margaret Waring you have not found a poor, wretched, half-witted niece. She is a lovely, charming, and accomplished girl. I am in love with her character; and she won't be an incumbrance, for she has a little fortune—unless—oh, that must be safe in her guardian's hands; and if she won't marry

James Maynard, I will! He is a man that any father, or any woman might be proud of: and, after disowning him all these years, I don't see that Lord Littmass has a bit of right to interfere with him."

- "My dear Sophy, we must not be too sure yet that this story of the marriage is true. But, whether it be true or not, your account of my niece reminds me that I have too long neglected my duty to the poor girl."
- "Oh, mamma, let us send away all our guests and get her here, alone with ourselves at first."
- "No such haste is necessary, my dear. In another week we shall be alone. But I shall write for her tomorrow, as soon as I return from the cottage. I must have some conversation with Partridge."

CHAPTER XXV.

LORD LITTMASS'S house in Mayfair was small, but sumptuous. In an apartment, which was furnished in a singularly rich and tasteful manner, he sat at breakfast, on the third morning after his return from Devonshire; and opposite to him sat his ward, Margaret Waring. Strewing the carpet on his right hand were the morning's papers, already hastily glanced over, and on his left stood a small writing table. Lord Littmass was now breaking through his cherished habit of breakfasting alone when in his own house. It was a habit dictated by his literary character. His writings were essentially books of ideas. As philosophical novels they were unapproached in excellence. Having been warned of the weak point in his constitution, he had learned to manage himself so well that his digestion rarely failed to be in most excellent order, and his sleep light; so that a good night's rest generally sufficed to efface any sense of the previous day's annoyances, including even the not unfrequent one of heavy losses at the club whist-table over night.

It was a happy peculiarity of his temperament that he could avail himself of the Scriptural maxim "Sufficient for the day," to an extent rarely attained by others. For he applied it retrospectively, and refused to allow past ills to affect his present satisfaction.

"Remorse," he wrote in one of those charming, half-serious half-sarcastic, tales which at once instructed and delighted a whole generation,—"Remorse is the indigestion of the mind. As the removal of the offending substance from the dyspeptic body allows a return to comfort and pleasure, so the ejection of the disagreeable from the memory permits the mind to proceed in satisfaction. The continued presence of a noxious idea or reflection can have only an irritating and injurious effect upon the mental system. That the dead should be quickly buried out of sight was the leading idea of the wise apostle who warned his readers not to look back to things past, but ever to press forward; and who, in his ardent enthusiasm for vitality, made even his dead Lord live again."

Lord Littmass's forte thus appears to have consisted in morals rather than in theology. The sentiments which he regarded with the greatest complacency were the offspring of his morning meditations, conceived under the threefold influence of sound sleep, a clean tongue, and an untroubled mind. On the morning in question he had written but few sentences before breakfast was announced and Margaret entered the room. The last of these sentences, put into the mouth of one of his characters, ran thus:

"It matters little, in the estimate of moral chavol. I.

racter, what our relations with others may be, so long as in those relations we act up to the highest standard which the particular circumstances admit of being applied. The game of our life may be a bad one, but it is for us to make the best move the situation allows."

At this moment Margaret stood beside him, timidly presenting her fair forehead for the salutation which, in these last few days of their companionship, Lord Littmass had adopted the habit of benignantly imposing.

- "Good morning, guardian," she said, in a full rich voice, as he rose to greet her.
- "Does the noise of the great city still banish sleep?" he asked.
- "I think I am becoming more accustomed to it, but the gloom and ugliness of London will never diminish for me, I fear."
- "You have been rather spoilt for real life, I am afraid," returned Lord Littmass. "The desultoriness of Italy, and the abandon of the sea are bad teachers for one already a little too much disposed to reverie."
- "I think I could do real work, if—if I had real work to do."
- "And what would you do if you were absolutely free—free to go where you pleased, and to do as you pleased?"
- "I have never contemplated such a fate; but it seems to me that I should make haste and see all the

paintings and hear all the music in London, and then away to my studio in dear old Rome."

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"Yet you left that for the gloom, and ugliness, and, I may say, dirt of a convent."

"Ah, I was ill, and discontented with life, and I understood that—" And here she hesitated and was silent, as if remembering that she was in reality speaking to a stranger, who could not comprehend her, or else to one to whom she had no impulse to reveal herself.

"You found that the conventual life differed from what you expected. Well, I am scarcely surprised at that. But we won't recall any painful experiences. It is sufficient to discover and repent of our mistakes, without keeping them ever before us. There is one lesson at least which it will be enough to have learnt; that while in this world you belong to this world, and that its duties are not to be shunned for the selfish gratification even of the devotee. I do not doubt," he continued, waving his hand to arrest the indignant remonstrance which he felt was about to escape from her lips, "that you were actuated by motives which presented themselves to you in the divinest aspect. Such has ever been the case, even with zealots who have disgraced humanity by their crimes. are old enough now to be told that it is not only by the motives, but also by the results, of any course of action, that its propriety must be determined. For instance, it would be a dereliction of your duty as a

woman, were you now to continue to devote yourself exclusively to the mode of life you have hitherto followed. Education, or self-culture, when merely desultory, degenerates into selfishness. You have read one or two of my earlier tales, and have acknowledged that you enjoyed reading them. What would you have thought of me had I written them for my own sole gratification, and kept them to myself? You would rightly have considered me culpably selfish. The artist who produces beauty has no right to hide it under a bushel. His faculty is a wealth entrusted to him for the good of all."

Lord Littmass paused to help himself to some of the good things on the table, and Margaret remained silent, wondering what change in her life his serious tone portended. She remembered, too, that James Maynard had more than once talked to her in a precisely similar strain. The practical end at which he aimed was her marriage with himself. But what could be Lord Littmass's intention?"

"You, too, possess faculties," he resumed; "and a time may soon come for turning them to account. I do not mean in the accomplishments the pursuit of which has constituted your education; but in the fact of your being a Woman. You look surprised, as if the announcement were a novel, and scarcely credible one; but you may rest assured, my dear ward, that men generally will be of my opinion on this point I can easily understand your not having thought of

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it before; yet that not very prudent or observing person, Mr. Maynard, found it out. But we will not speak of him. You need not anticipate farther annoyance from that quarter. Well, in addition to the supreme fact of your sex, you have certain invaluable. gifts of mind and body bestowed upon you by Providence, which constitute an ample capital for the uses of life. I am aware that this is not the view taken by certain good people whom you have met abroad, and that they rather hold it a duty to reproach the bounty of Nature, and to reject the good things kindly provided But your perceptions and experiences for our benefit. have now grown sufficiently to enable you to see that there is a worldliness of another world, little, if at all, less mischievous than the most overweening worldliness of this world. As I read you, you are one in whom a mere selfish existence for your own benefit, whether in respect of this world or of the next, would be impos-Is it not so?" sible.

"Oh, yes, indeed. Do you not remember my saying how rejoiced I should be to have some duty to perform? Only show me how I can be useful, and I shall be grateful indeed."

"I was sure that it is so. Well, the first duty that I shall impose upon you will not, I hope, tax you very heavily. After that has been done there may be something to occupy you more seriously. At present I have only to enjoin upon you the absolute necessity of putting an end to Mr. Maynard's presumption.

Hope on his part is vain, and the suspense is injuring his career. I expect that when he next addresses you, you will show a firmness and decision in refusing him which will bring matters to a termination. Now, go into that room, and wake up the piano. You need not fear disturbing me."

Lord Littmass looked after Margaret, as she passed through the folding-doors, saying to himself,—

"Nineteen, and still almost a child: as much so. too, in form as in mind. The dame is right. not as other girls. Yet there is no defect anywhere, only the development is slow. The French proverb says, 'God makes females, and man makes woman.' The idea of man suffices to make most of them, but that idea has not yet occurred to her. What I have been saying to her would have set any other maiden's heart beating with curiosity or apprehension: there she sits, already absorbed in the reverie that oozes in music from her fingers. She does not know what a personal human sympathy means. What a sensation she would create were I to introduce her into society. It would take all the art of a Raphael to paint her Madonna face; of a Titian to match the warm angelic tint of her hair; of a Murillo to hint the undeveloped maryels of her form through fitting mystery. Woe to the man who shall love her, for she will be pitiless in her insensibility. That clear lofty brow. where the moral and intellectual natures combine to dominate and repress the as yet unconscious physical,

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will bow to no ordinary assault. Not that her nature is a cold one. No, there is not the whiteness of complexion which indicates the hard, insincere, selfengrossed disposition. One endowed with such wealth of gold in her tresses must some day learn to love. She will love but once, and with an all-absorbing passion. Woe to her should she discover that she has done so unworthily. One man will be a fate to her. She will be the fate of many men. What to do with her? The nunnery scheme has failed. I cannot send her back to Rome, or give her a separate home. He will seek her out again. And I cannot long conceal her here. A rich marriage to one who will take her without any portion, seems the only escape from the dilemma. There must be no going into society, where, even about her, the second question will be, 'How much has she?' By-the-by, I wonder what has become of James. The dame says but little of his visit in her letter. It is clear that Margaret does not care for him, except, perhaps, as a friend. He has always been good-natured to her, and is intelligent, imaginative, and well-looking. I rather wonder at her indifference. But it must not be. Back to Mexico he may go; but he goes alone, or not at all. I must settle that point with Tresham. Any letters?"

This to the servant, who came in to clear the breakfast table.

[&]quot;They are in your lordship's study."

[&]quot;Bring them here. No, never mind, I will go there."

Then, to Margaret, he said, looking in through the open doors,—

"Thank you, my child. I like your playing very much. You must have some lessons of G——. You will do him credit. You can do as you like now; amuse yourself here or in the library until luncheon. I propose to take you in the afternoon to see some paintings."

Passing into his study, Lord Littmass threw a glance over the letters, which lay in a row upon his table, arranged so that he could see at once what the morning's delivery had brought forth.

"Oh, money, money!" he murmured; but passed over the letters which seemed to have extracted the groan, to take up one which he recognised as in Lady Bevan's handwriting.

The contents were brief, but they caused him vast annoyance.

" LINNWOOD, Wednesday.

"DEAR COUSIN LITTMASS,

Your devotion to your duty shames me; for I see now that I have neglected mine in relation to that poor child. Her mother's fault has been too long visited upon her; and if she be inferior to other girls in intelligence, she the more requires the consideration of her relatives, of whom I am the nearest. I was anxious to hear something of her from Partridge, and drove over to the cottage this morning intending

to make friends with her, but was too late to see her. What I have now to propose and urge is, that they both come and pay us a visit here. We are going to be very quiet, until Christmas at least. Sophy already takes a great interest in Margaret, and vehemently backs my invitation. She had some conversation about her with Partridge yesterday, and thinks she can be useful to the poor child. James arrived at the same time, on foot, and hurried away after seeing the dame; so I suppose you will soon see him in town. If you are correct in your estimate of his flighty character, it would be very unwise for two such unpractical ones to come together, even if there were no other objection. I sympathise in the anxiety all this business causes you, and would gladly bear my share Your literary studies demand that you should be free from such disturbing influences. At the end of this week we shall be alone. It will be much the best so for Margaret at the first.

"Your faithful and affectionate cousin,
"HARRIET BEVAN."

"'Faithful and affectionate.' Yes, she is all that, so long as she believes in my—believes that what she knows is all that there is to be known. But how will it be when she learns the extent to which I have allowed her to remain in error about her niece? and about my own real position too? There will be no possibility of friendship; no certainty that I shall not be

publicly disgraced. The affair is becoming frightfully complicated. The unexpected development of this queer, sickly child into a beautiful and healthy woman is but an ill return for the solicitude which I bestowed upon her in expectation of an early death. If I let her go to Linnwood, she cannot go alone, and I can hardly prevent the old woman from going with her. since they know that I have no other use for her services here. So that in this case also I am illrewarded for my good-nature. The concealment of the mother's marriage might be got over, perhaps, with a little dexterity, but my inability to replace her fortune makes any step in that direction impossible. Then for him to be wanting to marry her, as if for the express purpose of adding to my difficulties. Who could have expected him to be caught in this way? An enthusiastic student, with his whole soul in his books, and minerals, and antiquities, careless how he dresses, and ignorant whether or not he has had his dinner: a born college don, whose whole sphere is celibacy. And what a lover! to walk through half a county, as he must have done, to see his objet, and just miss her thereby. It is true he could not guess that he would find the bird flown. I am not quite sure that I should have removed her on his account. but for Noel's unlucky discovery of her and her retreat. Curiosity would be sure to have taken him there again; or Sophia, who did not before know she was there. If it would suit me for her to marry at all, I suspect that she and Noel would just do for each other. He will have plenty for both, if he has not already, unless that speculative uncle of his makes as complete a mess of his affairs as I have done of mine. But I don't like Noel: or, which is, perhaps, nearer the mark, he does not like me. He is civil enough, and even deferent to me; has high respect for my books, and all that, but I can see that he mistrusts me. I find myself shrinking from his clear, direct gaze. I hate the innocence that comes of ignorance—in It is a feminine quality, and is very well in a woman; but in a man it is a monstrosity. would virtue be if it had no exercise? Flabby and soft, like any other muscle. 'Lead us not into temptation' means, really, 'Keep from us the experience which alone gives exercise and strength.' petition for women, though. Religion is essentially It involves emotions, which they so dearly love. Noel could hardly marry Margaret without learning about her birth and fortune. He would deem his instinctive aversion justified. It is true that I might overcome all that. A little flattery, skilfully administered, goes a long way with the young. A man in my position, taking this young fellow into my confidence, appealing to the sense I have of his honour and generosity, as the only means of averting ruin, if not disgrace, from a name honoured in British literature,—above all, if he happened to fall in love with Margaret, as I believe he would be sure to do if introduced to her,—yes, the scheme is feasible; but——can I humiliate myself so far? And my answer to Harriet? I cannot delay that long. And what can have become of James? He must have gone to Oxford to digest his disappointment there. Yet he is bound to present himself to the Board. The first thing to do is to get him off again without seeing Margaret, except in the brief interview necessary for her to dismiss him. Hard work in a Mexican mine will soon enable him to recover from that blow; at least, I hope so.

"And now to work, for I must not waste the whole morning in these reflections. Already is my publisher growing impatient. Would that I had not been obliged to take part payment in advance. The very feeling of being compelled to get on seems to arrest my hand. It destroys the freedom with which my thoughts used to form and shape themselves, and impairs the excellence of my work. Ah me! had I lived the life I endeavour to describe, how much purer, methinks, had been my style. I know how artificial it is, and the world is beginning to suspect it. Did it know all, could it behold the mass of entanglement from which the Man struggles to put forth the Work -work that shall be acceptable by its purity and simplicity-how it would marvel at the contrast between his actual and his ideal, himself and his performance! Yet, why should this astonish? Is it not the unvarying law that out of death springs life; out of corruption, beauty? and this, in the world moral and artistic, as well as in the world physical. But to work.

"'It matters little what our relations to others may be, so long as in those relations we act up to the highest standard which the particular circumstances admit of being applied.' An unimpeachable sentiment, with my own practice for illustration; yet I have put it in the mouth of the villain of the piece. But I must not stop to analyse my own position, but set with resolute will to work, aiming at the ideal, which, after all, is perhaps the brighter and clearer for its contrast with the gloom from amid which it shines. From the combustion of the refuse comes the illumination of the city. Even Tophet has to be utilised now-a-days,"

CHAPTER XXVI.

James Mannard left the cottage, and mechanically retraced his steps, not slowly and hesitatingly as if dubious of his own intentions, but with a rapidity resulting from intense irritation. The condition of his mind was one of mingled disappointment, perplexity, and anger. He rebelled against the mysterious destiny that subjected his career to the malignant influence of one who moved in a sphere so widely separated from his own; and incapable, apparently, of sympathising with him. He seemed to himself to be another Tantalus, to whom a fair and reluctant tormentor had been appointed in the person of Margaret. It was sufficient that he put forth his hand to grasp her, for her to be withdrawn from his reach.

And he had come back to England in such high hopes! hopes which had since been encouraged and confirmed by his interview with Mr. Tresham, to whom he had reported himself immediately upon his arrival in London. And it now struck him that perhaps Lord Littmass would oppose his having the permanent appointment unless he consented to abandon Margaret,—the appointment which he had sought

solely because it would put him in a position to claim her.

Mile after mile, hour after hour, with heated head and unflagging energy he marched, now over the hills which overlooked the fire-desolated town of Minehead, now along the high road that led towards London, careless of fatigue, forgetful of food, covered with dust, and heedless of the looks with which those whom he met regarded his wild hurrying figure, until night fell, and the lights of the little town of Bridgewater stood before him. Almost staggering into the first publichouse he comes to, he calls for beer. Once, twice, thrice the jug is refilled and emptied almost at a draught, and presently he is on his road again; presently again beyond the reach of the gas-lamps, and with nought but the grey track and the pale light of stars to guide him. Nought but the starlight without, and the blind, unquestioned impulse within.

A man may walk through the first hours of the night cheerily and briskly enough; but nature will not be cheated. Let him start freshly as he will, yet three, four, or five o'clock is sure to beat him, if only by the very monotony of his darkened steps. Thus Maynard found himself before dawn resisting the impulse to sit down awhile by the roadside if only for a moment—resisting it again and again, until he could resist it no longer. So down he sat, his back against a slanting mile-stone, and his face toward a grassy bank surmounted by a hedge, and soon fell fast asleep.

The day broke, dull and lowering. There was no sun to glare in his face and wake him; no passer-by to disturb him with curious inspection. What traffic had once been on that road was now absorbed by the railway, and that was too distant to rouse him by the shrill whistle of its engines, or the roar of its rushing trains.

Towards noon he woke and resumed his way, but with a feebleness that somewhat surprised him. Coming to a village and seeing a child sitting at a cottage door with a piece of bread in its hand, he suddenly remembered that he must be hungry, and hurrying to the inn he asked for food. Bread and cheese, and the local beverage, cider, were placed before him; and after a hasty meal he was again on the road. Soon the sun came out, with gleams of heat unusual for the season,—so at least they seemed to him,—and he felt that his system must soon give way under the present strain. All at once he stopped and stood still.

"Where am I going?" he asked of himself, aloud.

An answer rushed into his mind. He thought for a moment, and being satisfied with the idea, exclaimed,—"I will."

A little farther and a station was before him. Even now the train was approaching. Rushing into the ticket office he threw down some coin, saying, "Salisbury, third," and in another minute was seated in the "Parliamentary train," and going, by slow stages, towards the scene of his last residence and labours in England. A single thought seemed to have taken possession of him, and there must be no delay until it was fulfilled.

It was very late when the train reached Salisbury. Entering the refreshment-room of the station, he swallowed the contents of a large decanter of water, seized a handful of biscuits, threw down money in payment on the counter, and hurried away; not to the town; not to seek an inn, or his own old lodgings: but away to the bleak moor and wild autumnal night; for his destination was Stonehenge!

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CHAPTER XXVII.

HAVING gained a release from the exacting hands of Sophia Bevan, Edmund Noel lost no time in carrying out his engagement. Leaving Linnwood early enough to catch the Bridgewater coach, he was enabled to reach Salisbury by railway on the evening of the same day. A good dinner and night's rest in the comfortable rooms of the principal hotel, followed by as early a rising as daylight would permit to be available, and Noel was again on the road; but this time on foot, as he wished to be thoroughly independent of man or horse; and to this end he carried with him a supply of provender that would enable him, if needful, to pass the entire day on the scene of his investigations. took also a measuring tape and a compass, which he purchased on his way through the town, and his notebook.

The sharp morning air, remains of a stormy night, blew freshly in his face as he strode over the springy turf, imparting to him a colour which harmonised well with his graceful and well-grown frame, and his careless happy life; a life containing just so much occupation as kept his mind in healthy exercise by giving

him something to think of, something to work at, something to hope for, and nothing to regret.

"Surely," thought he, as he breasted the keen blast, "I am about as happy at this moment as anyone has a right to expect to be. Perfect health, and freedom to go where I like, and do as I like, and having at the same time an engrossment of my own selection on which to expend my energies. I cannot imagine anything better aiding one's self-culture than this review-writing which I have lately taken up, when conscientiously done. It gives one a knowledge of men, a knowledge of things, and a knowledge of books, hardly attainable in any other way. There may be something in what the editor said when he told me that it might be a pity for myself, if not for him, that I am not obliged to write for a living. He does not approve of my wishing to choose my subjects. Yet I cannot bring myself to spend my time on uncongenial work. What I have got now suits me exactly, for it enables me to air my own fancies on a grand subject, and at the same time compels rigid examination. Surely the loveliest of all freedoms is this of the mind. Here can I investigate, and reject or adopt any theory, without reference to anything but the facts, and without feeling in the least degree called on to square it by any authoritative rule whatever. It certainly is a great thing to be independent of party, and careful only for truth. Shall I forfeit that independence when I get into public life? I hope not. Yet it is said

that individuals can do nothing unbacked by party. Well, at present I imagine others will have to give in to me, if we are to work together. Who is it that speaks of 'uncompromising youth?' I see his meaning now."

And so, communing with himself in highest spirits, Noel at length reaches the Druid's Circle, where, after placing the editor's letter and notes upon one of the prostrate masses, and weighting them with stones to keep them from flying away, he takes out his compass and places himself in position to commence his measurements.

The question whether Stonehenge was founded on an astronomical idea, either having reference to the sun, or forming but one of the orbs of a vast planetary system of similar remains, or whether it was referable to a worship possibly still older and ruder than that of the heavenly bodies, and thus belonged to a period when men had not yet begun to look for their gods in the skies above them, but were content to adore such powers of nature as they perceived to be ever operating in their midst for life or for death; whether, again, it yielded internal evidence of being so closely allied to other and similar structures in distant lands as to compel a belief in the original unity, or at least the remote intercourse of mankind:—these were some of the points on which Noel hoped to obtain a light by means of his present investigations.

The subject was a large one, but the details upon

which its elaboration depended were minute, and Noel was beginning to despair of making satisfactory observations without the aid of more complex and accurate appliances, when he was startled by a voice close behind him saying, in a faint and subdued tone,—

"I think I can save you all the trouble you are taking."

Turning round to the speaker, whose unexpected presence was thus declared, Noel failed to recognise in the haggard travel-stained man before him the stranger whom he and Sophia Bevan had encountered in the lane near Porlock Cottage but two days before, until Maynard spoke again, this time with a slight smile,—

"I do not wonder at your not recognising me. Two days and nights in the open air and on the dusty road are apt to disguise one even in this cool England."

"Mr. Maynard!" exclaimed Noel. "Surely you have not walked all the way here from Devonshire?"

"Not quite all the way, but enough of it to have escaped bed and almost board too. In fact, I have been living so much in the open air of late in Mexico, doing most of my travelling by night on horseback, that I fear I miscalculated the amount of fuel necessary to keep the engine going while performing the extra labour of walking."

The significance of his tone and manner suddenly flashed upon Noel. He recalled what he knew of Maynard's history, and the circumstances under which

they had so lately met and parted. It was clear to him now that, in an access of passion and despair, the poor fellow had travelled day and night since leaving the deserted retreat of his beloved, forgetting even to eat, and had by a wonderful coincidence directed his steps to the same spot that he himself was visiting, and had there passed the wild night without food, or shelter save the lea of one of those stones! And now he had returned to his right mind, and was attempting to conceal the shame he felt at the irrational part he had acted.

In an instant Noel had determined upon his course. He would improve his acquaintance with the man of whom he had heard so much, and in whose career he felt more interest than he had allowed Miss Bevan to suppose. So he said, cheerfully and encouragingly,—

"How I should have enjoyed being with you! I came early, intending to pass the greater part of the day here, and make some notes for a paper that I am writing; but I find that I cannot get on as I wished, and was thinking of giving it up and returning. The only question was whether to carry my intended lunch back with me, or to leave it here for the ghosts of the Druids. By-the-bye, you must be ready for some breakfast. Will you do me the favour to eat my now superfluous lunch? I can give you some sherry to wash it down with."

Maynard fixed a keen glance on his face for a moment, as if to read the spirit in which the welcome offer

was made, and then, without further hesitation, accepted it, saying,—

- "Thanks; and, in return, I will give you the results of my previous visits here. For Stonehenge is an old friend of mine, and has cost me a good many hours of pretty severe work. In fact, I once——"
- "Breakfast is ready," interrupted Noel, who had now spread his viands on the stone beside which they were standing. "When you have demolished these, I shall be glad to receive some instruction."

So Maynard fell to, and soon the food and the wine began; to tell upon his exhausted system. His spirits rose, and he could hardly remain silent until he had finished.

"It is very wonderful," he said, "and somewhat humiliating, to feel the difference made in that noble creature Man by the simple transfer of a few ounces of food from the outside to the inside of his economy."

"Which of the philosophers is it," asked Noel, "who says that man exists only to move things, and that all the power in the universe can do nothing more than effect a change of position among its particles, so that the only difference between a state of utter chaos and the highest civilisation possible is but a difference of arrangement?"

"He must have been a near relative," said Maynard, laughing, "of the farmer who estimated the value of a picture by the cost of the colours and the labour of the man for laying them on. What is that you would

learn about Stonehenge? Do you know that this stone which, by serving me for a table, has taken its share in the office of renewing my life, is, doubtlessly, the very altar on which multitudes of human lives have been sacrificed? It has waited a long time to make such small amends."

"I cannot do better," returned Noel, "than tell you the whole story. I wrote a paper for the W——on ancient worships as indicated by their remains, and the editor, after accepting it, has returned it to me with this letter, which, if you will take the trouble to read it, will show you what I want here. Unfortunately, I have not brought the means of accurate observation, and he has omitted to send me the book of which he makes such warm mention."

"My own book!" cried James, glancing over the letter as Noel spoke; "and I had almost forgotten all about it. This is indeed a pleasant surprise, and the place most appropriate for its occurrence.—And I had begun to wonder what it was that drove me to Stonehenge."

And overcome by his emotion, he sank back upon the stone, and, pressing his hand upon his forehead, murmured,—

- "Margaret, Margaret, who knows but that perhaps even these stones may become your bread!"
- "This is charming," exclaimed Noel, with the generous enthusiasm which on occasions gave an irresistible winningness to his manner. "And you shall

teach me how to review your own book. Its name shall stand at the head of the article as my text; and I don't care if I have to re-write the whole paper; though I must lose no time in beginning, if I am to do so."

"Look here," said Maynard, rising from his seat, and mounting on the prostrate altar beside the remnants of his meal, where he was joined by Noel; "give me your compass, and I will soon show you what Stone-There is the south, and no arrangehenge means. ment is discoverable here that has any reference to the meridian. But glance along the side of yonder stone, which, though somewhat out of the perpendicular, yet preserves its original relation to the north-eastern horizon, and you will perceive that you are looking along the avenue exactly to the point of sunrise at the summer solstice. A similar arrangement is observable in other remains of the kind. And there is reasonable ground for inferring from the position of the astronomical stone in respect to the altar, upon which we are standing, that it was during the period of the sun's greatest altitude, the summer solstice, that the moment of its rising and appearing through the opening in yonder trilithon which faces the centre of the avenue, was chosen for the offering of what were, too probably, in later ages at least, often human sacrifices. Symbolism was not always idolatry, or worship always sanguinary; though too apt to become so when the priest has superseded the prophet, and conscience is

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dulled by ritual. My first object in taking up the subject of Stonehenge and its kindred remains was, to ascertain whether ancient science knew aught of the compass and its variations. I thought it would be such a grand thing to prove that the ancients were acquainted, not merely with the compass, but also with its local variations; because a knowledge of the latter involved a vast amount of careful comparison in various and widely separated places, such as could only be made by a people given to missionary enterprise, for purposes either of religion, conquest, or trade."

"They may have known and used the compass," said Noel; "but I can hardly credit their science with such accuracy as to believe that they knew of its variations."

"Anyhow they had it and followed it," returned Maynard; "but whether blindly or not, I am by no means positive. The cursus, which lies yonder and forms a secondary part of the scheme, is divided exactly in the middle by the meridian line that runs through Stonehenge, yet it does not accord with the true east and west. It is the same with the other remains in the neighbourhood. And you will remember that the magnet, or loadstone, was called 'the stone of Hercules,' and that Hercules was the sun-god of the Phœnicians, his twelve labours allegorising the twelve signs of the zodiac, and that the Phœnicians were almost certainly the first visitors from the Medi-

terranean to these islands, and that the Druids were their descendants. It was in following up the subject in this way that my interest in the compass became merged in the interest excited by the religious part of the question, and, once upon the track, I did not quit it until I came to the conclusions which I have indicated in my book."

"Can you give me an outline, in brief?"

"Certainly; but the details of illustration in proof are innumerable. It is impossible to interpret Stonehenge by Stonehenge alone. You know the form of the remains and the position they occupy with respect to the encircling vallum. Well, going into any old Hindoo city at this day, you find small temples or shrines of precisely the same form, with the addition of a recumbent bull placed in the approach. as you know, was venerated throughout Egypt and the East as the symbol of fecundity, and gave his name accordingly to one of the constellations. But we must go far back beyond the earliest days of Egyptian history or legend, to account for Stonehenge. say that it was actually built so long ago, but we must go thither to find the origin of the sect that built it, or of the idea that prompted it. And in thus going back we are rewarded by finding indisputable proofs of the genuineness of the earliest historical records in existence."

[&]quot;What, Stonehenge in the Bible?"

[&]quot;Yes; to comprehend Stonehenge, we must go to

the Hebrew Genesis and the Sanscrit Epics. Collating these, we discover that long, long ago, far up in North-western India, between the sources of the Indus and the Oxus, there dwelt a race, fair-skinned and light-haired, whose blood and ideas have ever since dominated or influenced mankind."

"In the Old World," interposed Noel.

"Ay, and in the New also; but wait and hear. is the romance of the world, founded on fact. descendants, as they migrated farther and farther from home, carrying with them legends of happy days and of a land of ease and plenty which their ancestors had enjoyed, described for us the Eden, or circle of delights,' and the golden age of the world, which we to this day refer to the Hindoo Koosh, 'the land of This was the famous Aryan race, of whose unhappy internal dissensions we probably have an allegorical account in the fatal strife of the first brothers. Though generally nomadic in their habits, they were of a refined and thoughtful disposition, having a conception of deity and of worship due. differences seem to have turned upon subjects partly social and partly religious. For we find the agricultural portion of them quarrelling with the pastoral about the estimation in which their respective occupations were held by the Almighty,—the first indication, by the way, of a sentiment of 'respectability,' 'orthodoxy,' or 'caste.'

"Well, the agriculturists, under the name of Cain,

after a bloody and fratricidal contest, migrated south, and then eastwards, achieving the conquest of the aboriginal black tribes which inhabited India, according to the Hindoo poems, and building cities to dwell in, according to Genesis. It is not with this division that we are concerned at present, though the land which they occupied contains everywhere to this day remains which are not merely similar to Stonehenge, but which are identical with it. Our business is with those who, probably, long after the expulsion or migration of the Cainites, spread from their original home westwards through Persia until they reached the shores of the Mediterranean, subduing, absorbing, or mingling with the aboriginal populations in their progress. Here was the seat of the most adventurous part of them. They had already founded empires in Persia and on the shores of the Red Sea; and now, as Phænicians, they sent out expeditions by sea to fight, to trade, to occupy, or to proselytise, over the greater portion of the world. The Pelasgic colonisers of Greece were no other than these. Their religion was originally Brahminical, for they acknowledged the One God while recognising him under many representations, and their great priesthood, which thus derives its origin from the very threshold of Paradise, and to one of the orders of which Melchisedek must have belonged, has never been surpassed in the adventurous character of its missionaries, or in its readiness to adapt itself to the people and countries with whom it

came into contact. Their rites were many; but the animating principle of them all was one. they multiplied forms, the various religions which they founded were all based on the unity of human instincts and the worship of Creative force, which they symbolised variously by such things as the Sun, the Serpent, the Bull, the Ram, the Pillar, the Tree, the Ark, and the Ring or Egg-shaped Oval. Of these the Sun, seems to have been regarded in a great measure as Deity itself; while the others were venerated as symbols of the masculine and feminine forces of nature, by and through which Deity operated. Of course, as Religion became precipitated, as chemists would say, into religions, and unscrupulous men banded themselves into priesthoods for their own selfish purposes, religious rites, from being means of grace, became only means of superstition and depravity. The Jews, urged, somewhat like the Americans of our day, by that force of character which is both a prophecy and its fulfilment, had early in their career a high idea of national des-The aspirations engendered and nurtured in the struggle for national existence, gradually became transmuted into a kind of higher law, under the domination of which they considered themselves authorised to disregard all the obligations of ordinary humanity in their dealings with their neighbours. Hence their poets and preachers sought to restrain them from following those practices of their neighbours which they perceived to be fatal to any lofty standard of

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character and attainment. The most debasing of these rites appear to have been those which were performed in honour of the feminine element in nature, which was worshipped under the name of Ashtoreth. It was to her that the 'groves' of the Old Testament were erected, and in her honour they sacrificed their children in burnt offerings, and practised the most degrading obscenities. Against this worship, therefore, the loftier minds of the nation directed all their force. They could not but admit that, according to their own sacred writings, the Deity was endowed with a duality of functions, and that, so far, the worship in question had a justifying plea; but such duality, they taught, was to be regarded only as a temporary assumption for a special occasion and purpose, and, this accomplished in the work of creation, thenceforth Jehovah, the primal 'He-She,' must be worshipped only in his masculine aspect.

"In this view they seem to have followed their ancestors Abraham and Jacob, who, by their erection of pillars, accompanied by certain rites, on various occasions, indicated their views on this point; though the latter, to my mind, is made to express himself ambiguously. The priest, however, was, as usual, too strong for the prophet. Intuitions succumbed to conventions. And there seems to have been a special fascination in the forbidden worship, for the Israelitish population were perpetually relapsing into it in spite of all denunciations, until cured of the failing by the

stern discipline of the captivity, and their contact with the more spiritually minded Chaldwans. The Jews, it has well been said, went into captivity a nation of idolaters, and came out of it a band of Puritans. The worship to which I have been referring associated, as you will have perceived, astronomical and terrestrial phenomena, in their creative, sustaining, and destructive forces. It was doubtless a pure expression of simple reverence, until degraded by designing men who pretended to special powers and information.

"One of the most interesting studies a man could take up now would be to trace the contributions respectively made by the fair Aryan and dark Turanian races towards the idea of Deity and divine worship, as thus exhibited. In Stonehenge we have both. The whole of the worships I have been referring to are indicated in its formation. So deeply rooted in human instinct were these ancient conceptions, that the early Christians, on crystallising their community into a formal Church, found it expedient to avail themselves of the prevailing rituals; and so it came that even the Cross itself was accepted by multitudes on account of its accordance with existing preferences: and our churches are to a certain extent modelled after the shrines of the Hindoos, and these rough temples of the Druids. Draw the two greatest diameters of the vallum, place a tower, with or without a steeple, upon the point of their intersection, that is, in the spot occupied by the pillar in India and the circle

of stones here, and point the head to sunrise, and you have a Christian Stonehenge. There is a good deal more, however, to be said about the Cross in this relation, which I will not inflict upon you now. If you will come some day to my rooms at Oxford, I can show you what will leave no doubt on the subject."

"It is a wonderful generalisation," observed Noel, "and one that seems to shed a flood of light upon the darkest things in man's history, the origin and signification of his religions."

"Yes, it is more than a mere curious problem to be solved by research, and then given up for some other. Not merely has its study enabled me to attain firm ground of certainty respecting the process of the development of religious belief, while most others are diving into their own inner consciousness for a light that is only to be obtained by a study of the facts of the external world; but, for myself, I can say truly, that I have derived the profoundest satisfaction of my life from thus tracing the gradual growth and ascent of the religious instinct of humanity from the rude animalism of its first conception by the earlier or lower races of men, and its gradual refinement into a lofty spiritualism with the higher, as through the medium of art, morals, or science, through the affections or the imagination, men have learnt to form noble conceptions of the Infinite, and to respect the consistency of the divine Whole."

"And you include the New World in the category?" asked Noel.

"Yes, certainly; though whether the aboriginal races of America were conquered or converted by expeditions crossing the Atlantic from Europe, or by north-easterly migrations across Asia to North America, is difficult to determine. Their own traditions favour the latter. But there are evidences that the Atlantic was not always so wide as at present. The vegetation of the Azores and Cape de Verds makes it appear likely that those islands are the summits of a submerged continent, which once occupied at least a great portion of the intervening space. The legend of Atlantis may be a tradition of fact. It was probably such a depression of the region lying south of the Caucasus, including the Black and Caspian seas, that is referred to in the account of the Noachian deluge. The story of the Ark itself accords with the whole theory I have been propounding. For, when water was regarded as the feminine element of things, what could be more natural than to represent the matrix whence all life proceeded, as an ark floating on the face of the deep? But, however the migration was accomplished, the identity, in all leading characteristics, of Peruvian and Mexican with Egyptian and Asiatic remains, is beyond a doubt. In short, all the religions possible to man are based necessarily upon a combination which it is difficult for the mind to avoid regarding as the chosen process whereby Deity seeks to express itself distinctly

to man; or, which is probably the same thing, as the effort of man's intelligence to refer itself to the Whole of which it is a part."

- "So that even uniformity in worship and ideas does not involve unity of race, under such a scheme," said Noel.
- "No; I hold the world to have been inhabited long before the migrations of the Aryans. They were but as the Romans to Europe, or as the British in our day, spreading everywhere and carrying their religion and language with them."
- "It would be a grand task," remarked Noel, "to separate the remains of the aboriginal tongues from that of their conquerors, and track step by step the progress of the great original migrations!"
- "Yes, indeed. Philology is one of the chief sciences of the future whereby we shall learn the history of the past. Language, mythology, religion, and race, are the main indexes, as they constitute the main elements of man's history. The only thing is to be patient and refuse no evidence, hasten to no conclusion. It is the old folly to assume anything on partial grounds. Thus, men might be of distinct origins and yet utter similar sounds all the world over, owing to their physical resemblance. They might have similarity of religion, without copying from one another, owing to their moral conformity, and the identity of phenomena from which their ideas are derived. Or, on the other hand, they might have sprung originally from the same

stock, and yet have changed to what they are. The conditions under which they have existed can have varied only as soils and climates vary. The senses of hunger, love, fear, wonder, and the rest, existing alike in kind in all, could not fail to produce manifestations similar to each other. Men everywhere see the same agents employed in the preservation of the species, the same moving forces in the universe. They behold in the sun the same ruler of the year, and lord of the day, the banisher of cold and darkness, and bringer of light, and life, and joy, and all good things. And adoring the same object in the same spirit, what is more probable than that such similar beings should adopt modes of expression more or less resembling each other? Yet, though seeing all this, I have come to an opposite conclusion in respect of Stonehenge and the co-religions of the world. I mention this to show you how necessary it is to anything like an accurate result to take account of evidence from every source, and not to rest one's faith on any one line of argument, or any one branch of knowledge. The correlation of historical evidences is as important a department of man's education as the correlation of the sciences. And if you would really help on the sum of our knowledge, you must keep your judgment in arrest, at least until you have consulted all possible sources. It seems to me that the only way in which you can review my book, is by showing the nature of my conclusions and the evidence upon which

they rest, and then comparing them with those of others."

"Thanks," said Noel, warmly. "You help me to correct my natural tendency towards the picturesque and sentimental side of things. But, do you know, that I rather admire the simplicity of the old rituals, which, without any admixture of metaphysics, make nature the index of the Divine, and see, even in its most familiar operations, something to respect and cherish."

"The meaning of life," said Maynard, with serious emphasis, "is only to be attained through the observation of the phenomena of life. To the very study that you are entering upon I owe it that I am now a sane man instead of an ascetic monk. The mysteries have for me dispelled mystery, and that which was once a dark and hideous nightmare, is now my basis of hope and happiness. Whatever of evil mingled with the ancient worships, they at least recognised the divinity of the affections. They have led me to regard that as no true religion, or fitted for man, which ignores the attractions and antagonisms of sex; or which treats the division of humanity into men and women as an accident more or less to be deplored. By Stonehenge the ancients showed that they recognised the dual nature of creative power; and by its companion and neighbour the Abury circles, the nutritive and sustaining power. The Welsh and Hebrew names are one, and Phœnician in origin. Consult your Hebrew lexicon for a comparison between Caer

Saidi and its equivalent El Shaddai. The people who invented this rude nomenclature doubtless enjoyed their simple reverence, though unconscious how closely they were following the very first chapters of Genesis."

"Have you any theory as to the age of Stone-henge?"

"None; it is only the presence of the idea that is to me of consequence. If these be really the 'stones of Hengist' the Saxon, as the name seems to indicate, and erected by him in token of the final rout of the Britons, it belongs to the fifth century. The hypothesis certainly receives a negative support from the silence of Roman writers, but I see nothing else in its favour: and the name is just as likely to be taken from the stones hanging, or being supported aloft. that I really care to show is, that even if the Druids made tree-worship their speciality, and the builders of Stonehenge pillar-worship, their divergency was but that of two sects or schools within the same Church: the Church which existed numberless ages before the Gospel, and of which the fundamental doctrine was that of Humanity in Deity, and the comprehensive symbol 'the Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden.'"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Thus Noel and Maynard talked and consolidated their new-born friendship by the exchange of ideas. By degrees they came to converse of their respective colleges and acquaintances. Maynard made a reference to his recent Mexican expedition, which led to a mention of Mr. Tresham.

- "My uncle," said. Noel; and presently named Lord Littmass.
- "My guardian," said Maynard, "and the last time I was at Stonehenge he suddenly and mysteriously appeared, and carried me away."
- "Just what I shall do this time," returned Noel, "only the mysterious appearance is on your side. Had we not better be starting homeward?"

By the time they were half-way back to Salisbury, Maynard had yielded to his companion's entreaty that he would return with him to London, and take up his quarters in Mr. Tresham's house, where Noel had rooms of his own, and everything was at his disposal.

As they passed the blacksmith's hut, at the door of which Maynard had stopped with Lord Littmass, he remarked, in a somewhat shy tone,— "I rather expected to have found shelter here last night, but my friends have vanished. I never find that any knowledge is superfluous, and so I make friends with people of all callings. A bit of black-smithing that I learned here six months ago came in very handy lately on the Sierra Madre."

On reaching his hotel, Noel ordered a substantial luncheon, of which Maynard partook heartily, after having renovated himself by a hot bath. Whether owing to the excitement that still influenced him, or his hunger for intellectual converse after long abstinence, the conversation never flagged. He seemed to Noel to have studied everything, medicine included. His bath, for instance, set him talking about the benefits of heat as a renovating and curative agent, and he gave a description of the ancient Roman baths, and the admirable contrivance of bathing in hot dry air instead of in water, so as to gain health and strength by divesting the blood of its lymphatic particles, in place of absorbing additional moisture. Here Noel was able to join him, relating his own favourable experiences of the same process, as still practised in Turkey and throughout the East. From this, the conversation turned to the degenerating effects upon a nation's force of the multiplication of luxuries, and the question, how far the decline of Rome was aided by such causes. Maynard thereupon made some remarks upon the stability of modern civilisation, saying that its only safeguard consists in its deriving its

vitality from reason and experience, instead of resting on the dead authority of a past age.

They continued talking in this manner until they entered the cathedral, there being yet time to go round that fine old structure before their train started for London.

"It is solidly built," said Maynard, gazing up and "I wonder for what use it is reserved. around. Notwithstanding all we have been saying about man's antiquity, the world is young yet, and there is time for many an ample change both in faith and practice. By the way, we may carry on our Druidical parallels here. For the sun determines the position of our churches, the cross their shape, and the seasons their festivals: while their doctrines and hymns contain many an allegorical allusion to things now generally forgotten, but belonging to the same connection. long ago I found a clerical friend, who was correcting the proofs of a hymn-book which he was bringing out for his congregation, in great trouble about the spelling in the lines-

> 'Oh, Sun of righteousness, arise, With healing in thy wings.'

He could not determine whether to spell sun with o or u. I showed him that in using an o he was making a pun, while in using an u, he was following the ancient sun-worshippers."

"And how did you settle it?"

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"I proposed to put in both, and leave it to the con-

gregation to make their own choice. But he ultimately escaped the difficulty by altering it to

'Oh, angel of salvation, rise,'

because, as he very properly observed, 'angels, you know, have wings:'--an amendment and a reason at which I did not think it necessary to cavil. hymn reminds me of another and most curious parallel. I dare say you know of a custom which prevails in many parts of the country, of people squeezing themselves and their children through an opening in a rock, for the sake of 'luck.' A cleft rock has in all ages been associated with the worship of the Stone and Pillar, and there is abundant reason for supposing that the idea governed the construction of all the Druidical remains. The trilithons of Stonehenge are just what would be used for people to enter through into the inner shrines. Such passage was regarded as equivalent to a process of regeneration, precisely as is described in the Gospels. Few people, I take it, know the real allusion in the favourite hymn which commences,-

' Rock of ages, cleft for me.'

It may be that the first impression which is apt to be produced by such investigations is, that all religions are false. But the later one will inevitably be that all are true; or at least have a common and fundamental element of truth."

CHAPTER XXIX.

And so the conversation was continuous, as that of friends who had not met for years, and have much to tell each other. And Noel marvelled at the contrast between Maynard's present condition of intelligence and observation, and his mood and conduct of a few hours back.

Not a word was said of Margaret, although she was all the time uppermost in Maynard's mind; while in that of Noel, the knowledge of his companion's relations with her divided his consideration equally with his remembrance of the undeclared relationship to Lord Littmass. Thus Noel was in possession of the clue to every action and thought of Maynard's, while to Maynard he was little more than a newly and timely made acquaintance.

Knowing what an advantage it would give to Maynard to be made aware of his real position, he could not but long to impart to him the secret of his birth, as a key to unlock all mysteries for him, and solve all his difficulties. But the secret was not his own; and Noel was a loyal man, as Sophia Bevan well knew when she entrusted him with it. She little

thought, however, how soon and how sore his temptation would be.

Maynard made no secret of his anxiety to secure beyond recall the appointment of permanent director and manager of the Dolóres Mine, although he said nothing of his special reason for wishing it. Noel, however, comprehended him perfectly, and determined to espouse his cause, if needful, with his uncle. His doubt of such interference being necessary arose from his being unable to believe that the secret would be much longer kept from Maynard, who, as only son of a rich nobleman, would not feel called on to accept such a situation.

On arriving in London, Noel found the following letter from Sophia awaiting him:—

" Linnwood.

" DEAR CHILD,

"As soon as you left us mamma went to the cottage, and found the dame gone and a stranger in charge. She brought back a note for me from the old woman, which said that she hoped I would not take offence at her declining to come to Linnwood, but she could not run the risk of offending Lord Littmass, who has been very good to her in her troubles, and that she had just received orders to set off for London at once. I hope soon to see her back again, for mamma has written to ask his lordship to send Margaret to us for a nice long visit, with the dame.

"Now, don't be disagreeable, and say that I imagine things instead of demonstrating them, when I tell you that I believe the old woman, and am positive it is all a story of Lord Littmass's own making about Margaret's mother not being married. Mamma thinks we must have mistaken the meaning of the dame's phrase, and that it was a mere euphemism. She is so used to believing in 'cousin Littmass,' that it would be as painful to her to have to cease to do so, as pleasant to be able to believe in her sister's 'untarnished honour,' as she calls it. So, between the balanced evidence, custom rather wins the day.

"I am so stupid about these things, never having myself been either married or not married, that I can't see the crime of being deceived. But then, you say I am only half a woman, or if you don't say it you think it, which is worse; for I would rather have you say what you don't think, than think what you don't say, when it's anything disagreeable about me. At any rate, I am not manly enough to throw contempt upon a poor woman for being wronged by a man. And don't think me unwomanly, if I rebel against another of your manly ordinances. Mamma has told me what the poor dame meant by her 'troubles.'

"Once upon a time, she was a well-to-do industrious body, having a little money of her own, partly inherited and partly earned. She was induced to marry a butler of Lord Littmass's. This man took every sixpence she had, and bought a public-house

with it, making a will in her favour. He then took to drinking, and being otherwise manly, quarrelled with and ill-used her, tore up his will, and died. Whereupon, by virtue of man-made law, his brother inherited the whole of the property, which had been purchased with her money; and she was left utterly penniless. At best, had it not been invested in houses or land, she would have been entitled to but a third of her own money. The brother, on being appealed to, declined to part with any portion of what was legally his, and the poor plundered widow had to return to service to escape starvation. And in the meantime, the brother has taken a young wife and died, leaving her all the poor dame's property.

"If she is not provided for by Lord Littmass, we mean to take care that she is not obliged to end her days in a workhouse, which must otherwise be her reward for trusting to masculine justice. If I only were a man, I would not rest until I had abolished such a cruelty and disgrace out of the land. I shall sing with greater vigour than ever, in future,—

'It's oh! to be a slave,

Along with the barbarous (?) Turk,

Where woman has never a soul to save,

If this be Christian work.'

"I had rather be denied my soul in Turkey, than my reason in England.

"Mamma has just got an affectionate note from Lord Littmass, which must have crossed hers, saying that 'the poor child is in an excitable state, and requires change to a less stimulating air, with entire rest and seclusion,' and that he thinks of sending her abroad at once. Now that I have begun to distrust him, I find myself doubting everything that comes from him. Do find out what you can for me, and what Mr. Maynard is about. Perhaps your City uncle can tell you.

"Ever yours,

"S. B."

CHAPTER XXX.

Failing to hear from Lord Littmass at once, Lady Bevan began to be infected by Sophia's anxiety and excitement about Margaret. The favourite plea, "urgent family affairs," was successfully put into operation with their remaining guests, and the day that followed the arrival of Maynard and Noel in London, brought the two ladies to their town house, whence a note was at once despatched by Sophia to Edmund.

As if impelled by a presentiment of gathering ills, which might incapacitate him for future work, Lord Littmass had, by a successful effort of will, thrown off the sense of his outward position, and forced his mind into its favourite channel. And thus, while all the other parties concerned in his decision were in eager and anxious deliberation, Margaret, the object of them, was placidly following her innocent avocations; and Lord Littmass, the subject of them, was urging on his work of artistic creation with a rapidity and brilliancy never before known to him.

He was conscious of a force impelling him with a strange and resistless pressure, and that half alarmed him, even while he admired, and availed himself of its effects.

"Can it be true for me," he thought, as, pen in hand, he followed his habit of jotting down his thoughts as they flowed, "that the days of my work are numbered, and that I am already approaching the end of my appointed week of work? I never read that the Almighty was hurried towards the end of the earth's creation, though certainly it was left far from finished as an abode for human beings. What is it that thus impels me? What is the nature of this exaltation or excitement? I can trace it to nothing within myself; and as for my circumstances, their crisis would rather crush the intellectual faculties than accelerate their action. Whatever it may be, I will reap the benefit without questioning. What a grand thing it would be could one always work at will at the highest degree of intensity; without need of rest or break, or of artificial stimulants to one's flagging genius, until the work were done. Would that it were as pleasant to work out the actual problems of one's own life, and to extricate oneself from its difficulties, as it is to unravel the tangled clues of these creatures of the imagination. It is very clear, if my story be true to nature, that the noblest and best of men and women are as liable to contract impracticable relations with each other, as the reckless or designing. It is in their mode of

acting under such circumstances that their nobility exhibits itself.

"My poor little Margaret,—how little she dreams of the character she has suggested to me, and the use I have made of her; or of the situation into which the unequal development of her nature has led her imaginary counterpart, the Ione of my tale. With a poor or ordinary creature, the problem would easily be solved by sin or death. But she is one of those who can neither sin nor die. There is a strength of fibre in her nature, physical as well as spiritual, that makes such solution impossible. If she could sin, she would fade away and die. Mere suffering she would endure to any extent; but through the portals of wrong-doing is no exit for her.

"The situation, then, is an impossible one for Art, because the key is beyond Art to fashion. Success in accomplishing this deliverance will be my highest triumph.

"Methinks I hear the shallow critic of the Moralities exclaim against the placing of people so excellent in such a position. Fool! how otherwise could their excellence be proved and manifested? A noble nature is wasted upon ordinary situations. Set Genius to do clerk's work for shillings a-week! Whom the gods love they chasten.

"'But people so good would have avoided such complications.'

"Ha! master critic, again your shallow cavillings? Suspecting no ill does clearly not rank with you among the higher moralities. The lightning does not stop to count the cost when it darts from its home in the cloud to the bosom of the earth. The loves of the pure and the true are without prudence or anticipation. If certain natures approach each other too nearly, like heaven's own bodies they must rush together and blend. In every living breast dwells a potentiality of ruin. Circumstances govern all without: character all within.

"I could rescue Ione from her dilemma by summoning the Melodrame to her aid. Nature is often melodramatic, and by seasonable catastrophe cuts knots which are more than Gordian. But Art must not thus shirk difficulties. My characters must evolve their own destinies. Otherwise I own the enigma I have propounded to be insoluble.

"Clement and Ione must have loved each other under any circumstances which brought them together. That Ione is unable to love her husband as he claims to be loved, is a misfortune only to have been avoided by his foreseeing the incompatibility of their natures in time to prevent their union. Yet it is a question whether a man of Julio's disposition could have ignored his passion sufficiently to allow him for a moment to admit the possibility of his failure to make her love him. It is not enough for him that she loves him tenderly as any sister, and

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would gladly undergo any suffering to save him from pain. He knows that in the conflict between her love and her duty she suffers acutely, and is forsaking all for the latter. He knows that even Clement, while loving her so entirely, and not without conviction of mutuality, is yet truly and loyally attached to him, and mourns over the unhappy fatality which binds him to his friend's wife.

"It is the very nobility of all the characters, as I have drawn them, that constitutes the difficulty. A Frenchman would have no scruple in representing Julio, in an access of high-strung feeling, sundering the ties which bind Ione to him, and yielding her up to Clement. But these, being what they are, would not accept his sacrifice. They could not be happy while he was pining in his wretched solitariness.

"Besides, Julio is hardly a Frenchman's hero. He believes in life as a period and method of discipline, as well as of enjoyment, a process of education, with difficulties not to be shirked. He believes that Ione's soul, as well as her body, was entrusted to his charge at their marriage; and that it would be a derogation of his duty thus to release her from hers. And, strange to say, in thus adopting the most selfish course possible, he does not consciously think of himself.

"And so stands the puzzle, which, but for the arrest of certain developments, or harmonies, in those concerned, would have had no existence:—illustrating

my proposition, that the best of human beings may, with perfect blamelessness of character, intention, and action, occupy the most awkward and uncomfortable relations to each other. Whence follows legitimately my deduction, that it is not our relation to each other, but our conduct under that relation, that is of account in the supreme estimate of character.

- "But how shall I solve the situation? Once again, shall I descend into the region of melodrama, and summon the gross arm of physical catastrophe to the relief of spiritual grievances?
 - "Julio might commit suicide.
- "Bah! Anyone can do that: and I have made him of sterner stuff than a sentimental Frenchman. He knows, too, that his voluntary death would never be accepted by Ione as a contribution to her happiness.
- "Again, Ione might die. Already I foresee her in the agony of the conflict, crying,—

'Peace! peace! Orestes: like, I pray for peace!' and blessing God that He hath made death.

"A voluntary death for Julio would solve nothing, for it would not free Ione's soul. It would rather bind her to his memory, and make her love hateful to her. His accidental death might prove favourable to Clement's wishes; but accidental deaths do not always occur when they would be most convenient. Neither do they always take the right person. In

such matters the perversity of Providence is very conspicuous.

"Thus in Nature. But in Art? Shall I descend? No, a thousand times, no. In this, my latest work, I record my highest aim. I will not lower it to the general level of the vulgar. Cost me what it may, I will so lift myself up as to draw others up to me. By the way, I wonder where I have heard something like that before. I may have but a small following thereby, but it will be of the elect. Happy marriages are common enough—in books, but a happy un-marriage! That would indeed be something original."

"If you please, my lord, the servant waits for an answer."

It was a note from Lady Bevan, announcing the arrival of herself and Sophia in London, and asking when she would find him at home.

Despatching a hasty reply welcoming her to town, and excusing his delay in acknowledging her former letter, on the score of overwhelming occupation, which would not permit him to see her till the day after the morrow,—Lord Littmass, when alone again, almost writhed under this fresh accession to the gathering storm of his troubles. How could he longer keep his cousin in ignorance? And every hour he expected James to present himself to him, asking Margaret in marriage, and requiring a reason for his refusal.

"If you please, my lord, Mr. Tresham's servant has brought this note, and waits for an answer."

"This, at least, is only business, and need not cause me any annoyance," thought Lord Littmass to himself. "'Wishes particularly to see me in the morning.' Tone seems more serious than necessary. Pooh! I am growing nervous. I wonder if he knows where James is. Who brought this note?"

"Mr. Tresham's own man, my lord."

"Ask if he happens to know whether Mr. Maynard has called on his master lately."

The man returned with information to the effect that Mr. Maynard was at that moment staying at Mr. Tresham's house, having arrived there with Mr. Edmund Noel the evening before.

This intelligence filled up the measure of Lord Littmass's annoyance, and, by the number of reflections it suggested, put a stop to all further progress with his work. Lady Bevan and Sophia on one side; James, young Noel, and old Tresham on the other. Interviews requested; explanations sought; arrangements to be made suiting all parties, without compromising himself; and the clearheaded money-king Tresham, in probable complexity with his own unacknowledged son, the first to open the fire.

What wonder was it that it needed all his practised self-command at the dinner-party, to which he presently went,—for the time and the opportunity for taking Margaret out, as he had said, had passed unheeded,—to resist the temptation to forget his cares in deep drinking; or at the whist-table afterwards, to

refrain from plunging into desperate excess of gaming? But his temper proved equal to the occasion. None noticed in his utterances any lack of the refined wit for which he was famous; and when, next morning, he received Mr. Tresham, it was with the air of a man who, so far from anticipating aught disagreeable, was in a position and a mood to confer favours.

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